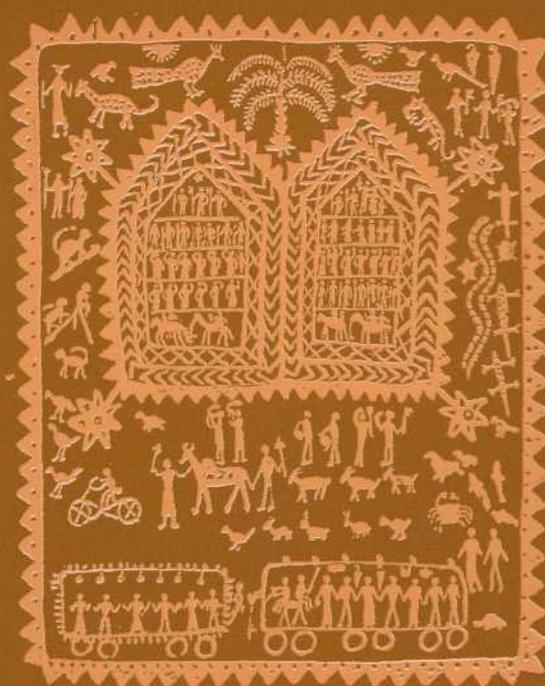


Globalisation, Women's Identity and Violence

Consolidated Regional Workshop Reports

Lakshmi Lingam
Shilpa Phadke (Eds.)



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Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, ORISSA

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Indian Association for Women's Studies

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PREFACE

The pre-existing crises of basic livelihoods, food and income insecurity; unemployment; environmental degradation; class, caste and gender violence; increased burdens on women and reduced entitlements to resources, are being felt in an intensified manner spawned by the bewildering processes of globalisation of the economy, politics and culture. New technological revolutions microelectronics and biotechnology are changing labor processes, altering relations of production and distribution, feminising some sectors of the labor force, and leading to a hitherto unprecedented globalisation of the production and economic power of Transnational Corporations. Transformations in global trade and finance have increased the flows of global capital many fold and rendered global and national monetary systems volatile and difficult to manage. New trade and economic zones, and growth poles are emerging. Women's labour is being used more flexibly and women workers are more mobile than they have ever been before. There is an increasing commodification of women's bodies by the markets. The markets and the fundamentalist right wing politics are defining women's identity in different ways, but both uniformly strengthen patriarchal values.

Given the criticality of these issues, particularly in a context of Structural Adjustment since the early 1990s, the Executive Committee (EC) of the Indian Association for Women's Studies deemed it fit to focus on the subject 'Globalisation, Women's Identity and Violence' in the regional workshops. The overview of the outcomes in the regional workshops indicate the echo coming in loud and clear from Indian Women of the intensification of marginalisation coupled with newer constraints and barriers being built by the fundamentalist and communalist forces. We have to deal with all these with greater strength and vigour in the coming years.

On behalf of the EC, I would like to thank all the Collaborating Institutions and individuals from the North, South, West and East of India who had shared concerns with the IAWS and organised workshop/seminars in these regions. This has been a mutually enriching experience. We totally had six workshops during the period 2000 - 2001. The reports are available in this compilation.

I would like to thank Ms. Shilpa Phadke who co-edited this report for her insights and grasp of the subject. Ms. Susheela Nagaraj Joish, Programme Co-ordinator, IAWS, who had helped me in the co-ordination of several tasks including the compilation of this report, needs special acknowledgements. Esvee Graphics, Mumbai, has shown their skill in typesetting and formatting the report in record time. The support of artists and printers from Bhubaneswar who have done the artwork and printing for this publication needs special mention. Special thanks to Prof. Asha Hans and her team, who had taken the responsibility for the printing tasks in Orissa, despite being pressed for time. The financial support received from Ford Foundation, New Delhi, to organise the Workshops and DFID, New Delhi, for bringing out Conference related publications made these efforts possible. We thank them profusely for the same.

Dr. Lakshmi Lingam,
General Secretary, IAWS
October 2002.

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ISSUES OF CONCERN: OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Lakshmi Lingam*
Shilpa Phadke^o

During the year 2000 – 2001, the Indian Association for Women's Studies had collaboratively organised regional workshops to focus on the broad theme of 'Globalisation, Women's Identity and Violence'. The workshops were held in Bangalore, Mumbai, Madurai, Ranchi and Lucknow in collaboration with various Women's Studies Centres in Universities and/or Women's organisations. Each conference/workshop/ seminar for they were differentially named, kept to the agenda in spirit but explored issues, ideas and theoretical constructions that were felt to be most pressing in the local-regional contexts.

The themes at each of these workshops were as follows:

- *State, Civil Society & Women's Empowerment*, was organised by the Department of Women's Studies, NMKRV College for Women, Bangalore, 30th November & 1st December 2001. The Bangalore seminar provided a platform for a dialogue between state's representatives, civil society participants and academicians to discuss issues related to globalisation, fundamentalism, and violence against women, and to assess the possibilities for women's empowerment from various positions and perspectives in this context.
- *Dalit Feminism: A Critique of Difference*, was organised by the Women's Studies Unit, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai on the 1st & 2nd August 2001. The Mumbai workshop set itself the objectives to understand the emergence of Dalit women's movement and discern the debate that has ensued with regard to issues like 'representation', upper class/caste women's leadership of the women's movement and dalit women's leadership as an alternative and issues of difference and identity politics.
- *Globalisation, Identity Politics and Rising Violence*, was organised by the Political Science Department, Gandhigram University and co-organised by the Centre for Social Analysis, Madurai on the 24th & 25th of March 2001. The Madurai

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workshop focused on the impact of globalisation on women on the Southern states with the aim to fostering a dialogue between researchers and activists to critically situate and analyse the various developmental debates in the context of globalisation and liberalisation.

- *Globalisation and Women's Identity (within the Orissa Context)*, was organised by the School of Women's Studies, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, 13th & 14th March 2001. The Bhubaneswar seminar examined globalisation with specific reference to the way it is played out in Orissa, at the same time underscoring the possibilities for resistance.
- *The Impact of Globalisation on Women's Lives*, was organised by the IAWS with the collaboration of ABHIYAN, Ranchi, 4th & 5th November 2000. The Ranchi regional seminar focused on the impact of the appropriation of forest resources on the lives of *adivasi* (tribal) women and the ways in which this exploitation was exacerbated by multi-nationals through the process of globalisation
- *Multiculturalism and Gender Issues*, was organised by the Centre for Women's Development Studies (New Delhi) and Institute for Women's Studies, Lucknow University, Lucknow on the 28 to 30 September 2001. The Lucknow conference focused on multi-culturalism in a nuanced and multi-layered way and examined its relevance for women and the women's movement in the current context of globalisation, fundamentalism and divisive identity politics.

In the following sections a broad analysis of the issues that had been discussed in the five workshops has been presented.¹ This has been based on the regional workshop reports submitted by the workshop co-ordinators. The detailed reports are appended to this overview. Hereafter for the purposes of simplicity and clarity all ideas and issues will be discussed theme-wise. We will begin with the three issues that formed the broad base for the workshops, viz. globalisation, identity politics and violence. The major issues that have been addressed in relation to this broad theme include the media, multiculturalism, fundamentalism, caste, class, representation, employment, education, health, and issues related to the women's movement and politics among others. The complex inter-linkages between these have been explored.

Globalisation:

As globalisation was one of the broad themes set for the regional workshops, a large part of the debates and discussions in all the workshops centred on globalisation issues as they impacted women in varied contexts. The main ideas addressed in the

¹ Hereafter all will be referred to as workshops regardless of what they were individually called.

six workshops included a perception of globalisation along a continuum, concerns regarding lack of data about women, informalisation of labour, reduced availability of social services and the impact on marginalised groups like scheduled castes and tribes. Another issue that was seen to be important was the ecological impact of globalisation and its effect on women's lives.

In many of the workshops it was pointed out over and over again that globalisation is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the acceleration in the speed and scope of movement of real and financial capital primarily because of removal of state controls on trade and investments; new information and communication technologies; and the emergence at the international level of new institutions for mediation and negotiation.

The process of structural adjustment began much before 1991, which merely represented the culmination of the process. The exclusion of the weaker sections and withdrawal of funds from the social sector had started much earlier. The fiscal deficit and little foreign exchange reserve created a situation, which superimposed new problems thus aggravating problems that had started much earlier. The very real anxieties in regard to globalisation are rooted in: its implications for workers and jobs, the environment, growing inequalities and the dominance of developed countries in the structure of world governance.

The development process during the second half of the 20th century which led to the formation of international finance organisations and overwhelming dominance of trade regimes was outlined. The struggles of the "old feminist" generation against the hegemonic development were recalled. It was argued that while the younger generation has had to face a situation in which welfare measures were already dismantled, the state had abdicated its responsibility and only some left over 'safety nets' were made available, while military expenditure has gone up dramatically.

It was argued that globalisation has always been recognised across the ages and that capital has always searched for global markets and been linked to the worst forms of coercion (like slavery for example). It was re-iterated over and over again that women's role in the macro economic order remained invisible. The non-availability of data for analysis has made the assessment of the impact of globalisation difficult and in the case of women this problem is further compounded by the multiplicity of the roles performed by women.

It was argued that even as globalisation provides benefits and opportunities to some, it forecloses opportunities for many thus threatening livelihoods and survival. In the future globalisation is likely to increase 'skill selectivity' as economic sectors become more receptive to information technologies and bio-technologies thus adversely impacting those without such skills. Liberalisation and globalisation have impacted the poorer classes in traditional occupations undermining their livelihood

and security. With the informalisation of labour, workers rights and legal protections are also withering away. Globalisation, by unleashing the forces of competition marginalises those unable to compete making the market the supreme arbitrator of success and failure. Concomitantly, social sector expenditures are likely to decrease further in the future. Current trends also suggest that there will be greater privatisation of both higher education and health-care facilities. Given the prevailing social preferences, this is likely to affect women adversely.

The gender implications of globalisation are difficult to determine because conventional economic categories and statistical data fail to capture the crucial aspects of women's participation in a developing economy. Women workers have been the first to be retrenched by the policies of liberalisation and structural adjustment. Loss of incomes combined with rising prices creates unrest and women are the worst affected as on them falls the stress inducing responsibility of balancing household budgets. The problems associated with globalisation are exacerbated in the context of Orissa, which is one of the poorest states of India with high proportions of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. Within this the access of the poor, particularly women to services, which form the core of human development sectors, declines.

A need was articulated for an in-depth discussion between people who were on different sides of the fence in their perception of globalisation. On the one side are those who see the decentralisation which comes with liberalisation as an opportunity to promote empowerment for women and on the other those who feel that the destruction of the resource base and universal market penetration serve to further disempower and marginalise women.

The question of women's empowerment was raised in the context of the New Economic Policy, which is cutting costs on health, education and social spending. Globalisation is impacting adversely on women's health. A gender sensitive public health policy was advocated to achieve gender equality, which is inclusive of health issues and programmes.

In the context of issues related to health and other social services, women's perception and utilisation of health care facilities was discussed. It was argued that there is a general apathy on the part of women toward their own health. As a result of the patriarchal order and the socio-economic conditions in which women live they tend to neglect their health, nutrition and the also face work related hazards. Several recommendations were made in workshops, for improving Primary Health Care centres to improve to women's health.

The adverse impact that appropriation of forest resources in Jharkand was having on the lives of *adivasi* women was underlined in the context of the globalisation. It was argued that multinationals were intensifying this process and women would

have to be in the forefront of struggles against global capital. It was underlined that globalisation in the region was at least 2000 years old and pointed out that it was not possible to set the clock back but that strategies to regulate the process would require organised and collective efforts.

It was argued that health, migration, employment, and environmental problems rising as a result of globalisation have threatened the sanctity of human life. However, organisations addressing the implications of globalisation must pay special attention to the issues concerning dalit women who are further oppressed in the globalisation process by virtue of being poor, dalit and women. The implications of structural changes for dalit women are particularly harsh. In the contexts of the connection between globalisation, multi-nationalism and displacement, the impact of these on dalits and *adivasis* who are often the victims of such 'development projects' was discussed. Dalits are more often displaced and are forced to migrate to the cities where they do not gain access to public services like ration, electricity, water, and education for their children. A detailed review of the education levels of women in Jharkhand (15-44 age group) underlined how development policies had in fact widened the gap between women and men.

Globalisation affects women at different levels. At one end of the social spectrum women are affected by consumerism and at the other end deprived of basic necessities. It was argued that globalisation also seeks to generate a new set of norms and values for women. These issues now take us to the realm of culture politics under globalisation. The political discourse of culture under globalisation has articulated itself through two related discourses - one of western culture bashing and the other a discourse of "Indian culture" that exhibits anxiety over the supposed hegemony of western culture. Both these discourses are anti-feminist and antithetical to the progressive women's movement.

According to the Human Development Report (1999) over the past three decades the income gap between the world's richest fifth and its poorest fifth has more than doubled. Even within countries the inequalities in incomes, wealth and access to resources are rising. Globalisation has seriously impacted employment. Women workers have as a trend moved out of agriculture to eke out an existence in the informal sector where wages are low, productivity is low and there is no security. However, it was felt that while the desirability of women's protest against globalisation is accepted we should also examine the crisis of governance, which mediates the effects of globalisation. Women should oppose not only globalisation but also their own governments and evolve new paradigms for governance not only within nations but also between nations.

The notion that globalisation has fostered new opportunities was repeatedly questioned in the workshops. It was pointed out that many of these have strings attached. For instance Unilever promoted marketing of its products through self

help groups. During the discussions there were attempts to go beyond the micro experiences and critically analyse self help groups as they also serve to co-opt women into globalisation. Likewise women in Panchayats or consumer markets while getting symbolic space and some marginal gains are actually isolated from the larger processes of change. They are stuck in their micro projects and get more burdened. Banks take no responsibility for micro credit as women now look after themselves. They internalise the market logic and start selling multinational goods out of sheer despair, which destroys local small-scale production. The importance of co-operatives in getting fair prices was highlighted.

The effects of globalisation on the Kerala economy were discussed focusing on the onslaught on agriculture, which impacted food security adversely. In relation to the post-globalisation scenario in Orissa three areas were studied: privatisation and its impact on small scale industry and cottage industry; the shrimp culture in Chilika and the Gopalpur Tata Steel project and at Kashipur Multinational Aluminium Giants. There was also some allusion to the various people's movements in protest against globalisation in Orissa.

From another perspective it was argued that the exploitation fostered by globalisation has added to earlier forms of exploitation. Globalisation has also not affected corruption that continues unchecked particularly in the political arena. In the context of women's involvement in Panchayats, attention was drawn to the epic struggle of Gram Swaraj Movement against aqua culture, in which large number of women were involved. The Aqua Culture Authority Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with undue haste because of pressure from the World Bank. Many politicians have farms violating the Supreme Court order. The discussant called for a second freedom struggle without which there would be no freedom for women or male workers or any other oppressed sections. In another discussion, the backtracking of the welfare state was underlined and the history of protest and resistance in *adivasi* communities was highlighted across India.

In the context of globalisation and the human rights of tribal women in Orissa it was argued that despite the fact that tribal communities are considered egalitarian, if the women took time out to participate in political processes, the fragile economy of the home collapsed. Tribal women were almost completely illiterate particularly in the tribal districts and were largely unskilled as well. However, tribal women have come forward to manage community grain banks, put together savings and started collective accounts. They were actively involved in various struggles and their strength has often reminded the state and the multinationals that the tribal people must be given a due hearing.

In a discussion on the pre-colonial status of Jharkhandi women it was argued that women controlled the then power structures. The penetration of global capital has meant an attack on the identities of *adivasi* and dalit women. The specific impact of

globalisation on villages, especially the rise in fuel prices that was affecting the mobility of women was noted. The differential sex ratios between the *adivasis* and the non-*adivasis* regions of Jharkhand were discussed.

The impact of globalisation on ecology was also dwelt upon. In a discussion on bio-diversity in traditional agriculture, it was shown in detail how the traditional system not only enhanced levels of nutrition and the availability of fuel and fodder but also gave cash income to women. The erosion of bio-diversity and tendency towards mono-culture of cash crops had thus not only ecologically adverse effects but has led to loss of access to resources, loss of employment and destruction of knowledge systems and feminisation of poverty. Creative suggestions were offered for a gendered approach to participatory bio-diversity conservation. It pointed out the crucial role of home gardens for the preservation of bio-diversity in Kerala. In the discussion it was also pointed out that while access to markets is important, training women in marketing may not be the most helpful skill. Recovery of knowledge systems, which are destroyed under the onslaught of market forces, is important.

The struggle of the workers in the Kashipur area was discussed. The people's agitation was spontaneous when their life, livelihood, home and forest was being snatched by multinationals. Police action and violence did not deter them and they posed a challenge to the state in very interesting ways. The special vulnerability of the Jharkhand region to global capital due to its rich mineral resources was also highlighted.

In the context of issues of displacement and ecology one argument suggested that natural land, forest and water are the foundations of human civilisation which is at stake due to globalisation. It was argued that displacement not only affects the life, livelihood and health of the tribal population but also their cultural life. The exploitation of tribal women by forest officials, police and multinational companies was also discussed.

The question of refugee women and children who constitute approximately 80% of people who cross borders because of political reasons was also discussed. Despite the signing of an international convention most developed countries have closed their borders. It was noted that as states open their borders to capital, they close them to populations.

Globalisation and its role in the feminisation of certain kinds of work was discussed at some length. There has been a steady feminisation of agricultural labour as wages dropped relative to other occupations. However, in the absence of reliable indicators there is no way to map the impact of these changes on the employment of women.

The feminisation of poverty was discussed largely in the context of the wage inequity in the unorganised sector. It was argued that women are largely excluded from

economic decision making. They face poor working conditions, low wages and limited employment and professional opportunities. Poverty has a distinct gender dimension. Women disproportionately contribute to unskilled labour, receive less wages for the work they do, and their access to surplus accumulation and control is severely restricted. This impacts not only on women but also their children.

Other illustrative cases discussed, in the context of work, included export oriented projects in Nasik, Mumbai slums and in Chengelpet, Tamil Nadu. In all the cases discussed the standards demanded are very stringent which create a stressful working situation. Health problems are not attended to and it is difficult for workers to even get recognition as workers. Another study presented work on producer's markets in Madurai and Dindigul. This is a specific project of the Tamil Nadu government to improve the lot of small producers under the impact of export orientation and import liberalisation. It was found that women's participation in these markets was uneven but those who did participate were substantially enhancing their contribution to the family income. However, it was found that the price fixing committees had no women members and women administrative officers were also not involved.

A need was articulated to distinguish between economic work and work of another nature like child-care this was countered by questioning the basis on which economic productivity is decided. It was pointed out that the women's movement initiated the entire 70s debate on work. Trends and patterns in the workforce in the 90s were examined and it was shown that in the rural areas there has been a decrease in the proportion of both self-employed women and women as regular wage workers while the proportion of women casual workers has increased. Women also suffered in terms of male female inter sectoral job adjustments which forced them to go back to agriculture. Rural women's weak educational background and lack of skills affects them adversely when modern sector activities in the rural non-farm sector become more skill selective.

It was pointed out that in the context of economic and social changes one needs to examine dalit women's contemporary situation and experiences from the perspective of caste, economic class, politics, and patriarchy focusing on the transformation in work, wages and family life. A feminism that aims to improve the lives of women and at the same time recognises their differential relation to one another cannot ignore the material reality of capitalism's class system in women's lives. Dalit feminism must respond to the emerging salience of class in addition to the qualitative difference brought about by caste.

The question that was being asked through the discussions was: how can we refashion a politics of the women's movement to mitigate the economic effects of globalisation on poor women and/or work towards resisting globalisation?

One position suggested that feminist politics that privilege the local in conjunction

with identifying the structural constraints of the economy and which build in an understanding of how patriarchal structures operate at all levels would prove better as an anti-globalisation strategy than one informed by the well known feminist slogan "Think globally, Act locally". We are urged to reframe our paradigm in the present era of globalisation such that it allows us to "think locally" as well.

While inequality and poverty have existed even prior to the contemporary globalisation, it is nonetheless important to examine and understand the peculiarities of this globalisation. Despite the complex linkages and inter-connections that have been drawn between gender inequality and the processes of globalisation, there continue to be serious gaps in information. There is little reliable statistical data on women's employment, informalisation of labour and other indicators. There are also several methodological issues in our analysis of globalisation that need to be further addressed. There is a need for more work in this area for greater academic clarity as well as to better understand the strategies that can be used to counter these processes.

Identity Politics:

Identity politics in the context of caste, religion, community, region, among other differences between women are among the most pressing issues that women's studies and the women's movement in India have to contend with in the 21st century. The workshops addressed identity politics in the context of caste and religio-communal issues.

The workshops, particularly the Mumbai workshop interrogated questions of identity politics in the context of caste. It was argued that while some critiques were of the view that until the caste problem is addressed no other social problem can be solved, but the women's movement saw gender issues as inextricably woven in caste and class issues.

In a related discussion it was argued that identity politics, under the thesis of multiculturalism takes into account neither historicity of identities nor believes in the idea of necessary structural changes to achieve long term social justice. It advocates tolerance and competition, ideas conducive for neo-liberal polity and a globalised economy. The core argument in issues of identity, that women are not a homogenous group/ community/ class but are divided into several categories that are related to each other in a hierarchical manner, require attention. Hence there cannot be one women's movement but different women's movements.

In the context of concerns about numerous women's movements questions of multiculturalism were addressed particularly at the Lucknow workshop. It was argued that the post-modern understanding of multiculturalism accepts boundaries and distinctions and argues for continuity of difference and acceptance. However, conversely the fluidity of this approach while it gives it a certain openness, it is

marred by not being able to define anything at all. There was an elucidation of the contexts in which Hindu fundamentalists had attempted to conflate various categories (like religion with culture). Furthermore, it was pointed out that multiculturalism could in fact be used for very undemocratic and anti-people ends. For instance, it was pointed out the market forces have joined hands with the Hindu right and this despite the market's rhetoric of 'openness' meant a strengthening of patriarchal values. The Hindu Right uses fundamentalist ideology to market globalisation as something indigenous thus selling a vision that in reality negates rights and equality. Another important point that came up concerns the political linkage in the present times between the fundamentalist agenda, neo-liberalisation and the forces of globalisation.

Cautioning against the confusion between multiplicity and multiculturalism, it was argued that it was critical that multiplicity should not be confused with democracy. The co-existence of cultures/ differences should not be mistaken for multiculturalism either. Further, multiculturalism itself cannot be used as a hold-all for all democratic values, or to signify democracy itself. Democracy must mean more than this.

Related to this there was a distinction drawn between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Different ethnic groups in democratic societies feel that ensuring procedural democracy is not sufficient to negate the pressures of cultural assimilation that are often demanded by majority groups. Such a demand for assimilation is seen to undermine substantive democracy as cultural identities are erased in the making of the national citizen in multicultural democratic societies. Both procedural and substantive democracy is necessary requirement for a full democratisation of groups and communities, which form a part of society. Fundamentalist groups resist these tendencies for democratisation and although such resistance is not conducted against globalisation and markets, it is often done so in either an anti-western or anti-modern discourse.

The criticality of locating the women's movement vis a vis the issue of fundamentalism was pointed out. There are differences within the movement, which mean that there is no one homogenous movement but at the same time there are commonalties. It was pointed out that Muslim women or women as Muslims were never an issue. In fact the community identity of women was not an issue in the campaigns that took place in the late 70s and 80s and even into the 90s prior to 1992. Concerning the issue of rape, women were not seen (at least within the movement) as holders of religious identities because the focus was on the abuse itself. The only time that identity was relevant was more to do with caste when there were gang rapes of dalit women. In the dowry campaign there was no assumption that dowry was somehow a Hindu issue, but at the same time not much attention was paid to the ethnic angles to dowry.

The first time that women's religious identity became an issue was in the Shah Bano case when Muslim women took to the streets in favour of their Personal law and opposed to the court judgement granting maintenance to Muslim wives. In response the women's movement had pro-Shah Bano demonstrations with women from all religious backgrounds participating. Women in burkhas led some protests. It was pointed out that it was interesting that there seemed to be a compulsion to take on the specific identity and this discourse raised the critical question of who can speak for whom.

These dilemma-inducing questions resurfaced during the Sati campaign where Hindu women using the same language of representation campaigned in favour of Sati. These concerns of identity affected the women's movements' participation and positions in the debate on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). In a situation where the Hindu Right Wing had appropriated the UCC, the women's' movement quickly distanced itself from the UCC and asked for gender just laws. The important question, it was argued, was where do we go from here. We need to link up with other movements to see what is the nature of strategies if any, to address the inter-linked issues of caste, community, gender violence and discrimination. There have been accusations that the women's movement is leaning towards majoritarianism which may be countered by asking for increased participation of other voices, but at the same time it must also be acknowledged as a valid critique.

During the discussion there was a great amount of agreement regarding the manner in which the movement had dealt with community identities and only looked at women as women and largely ignored other identities. It was felt that we do need to stop seeing minority women's issues as delicate and to review all personal laws. There is a need to clarify our position and to claim our Indianness in order to create an Indian platform. It was also agreed that there is a value to including different voices and that the very practice of such inclusion by the women's movement had negated accusations of being upper class/ caste/ majority.

Violence:

Issues of violence against women were discussed in several contexts during the six workshops. These included the linkages between loss of livelihood, poverty and violence; inter and intra caste based violence; both symbolic and actual violence in the context of religious fundamentalism and communalism.

In the context of the New Economic Policy, it was argued that the accelerated growth rate for India has not affected the increasing poverty. For a poor state like Orissa with a large tribal population and low rates of literacy this has meant very poor gender indices as well. The crime rate (rape, dowry murders, dowry torture, dowry suicides) against women has shown a rise in both absolute numbers as well as the percentage of crimes against women. This escalating violence was seen as also linked

to liberalisation, access to satellite media, and increasing alcohol consumption.

Connections were made between the violence of the development process on the resource base and people's livelihoods with the actual increase of various forms of violence against women. There has been a rise in the rates of suicide, domestic violence, and rape cases. Specific cases of violation of civil and political rights in the private sphere in the case of honour killings or culture/ identity-preservation based community terrorism in the form of acid attacks, public murders, community punishments were also discussed.

It was also emphasised that caste is an important factor causing oppression and violence among dalit women. Lower caste women's bodies are abused more often. This violence is perpetrated not only by non-dalits but also by dalits. It was pointed out that dalits are not a homogenous category and that intra dalit violence tends to go unnoticed. Inter-caste marriages even among dalits are opposed and the principle continues to be control of female sexuality. In intra-dalit violence the worst affected are women. Dalit men continue to control resources both within and outside the house and the incidence of domestic violence is high. It was strongly argued that while the women's movement should pay cognisance to caste-based discrimination and violence, the focus on patriarchy, which exists across different caste and class groups, should not be lost sight of.

For the purposes of this report issues of fundamentalism will also be located in the context of violence. The gendered dimensions of fundamentalism were debated at length particularly at the Lucknow workshop. It was put forward that the new fundamentalism in our country both from the majority and minority communities is promoting separatism based on religious identities. In both cases this has involved an increased focus on dress codes, modesty, chastity inevitably leading to diminished spaces for women. The women's movement must devote energies to counter these disruptive forces which were threatening the secular fabric of the country.

The basis of such fundamentalist discourses were discussed at length and exposed. Fundamentalist discourses are premised on the notion of a return to a glorious past, a past that never existed in any "true form". Fundamentalist discourses are inevitably detrimental to the rights of women. They tend to image women as non-producers and any historical evidence of women's contribution to the economy is ignored. It was argued that it was in this context that we must examine the present capitalist market and understand the re-entry of women in the market. There is also a need to understand and examine the political linkage between fundamentalist agendas and the forces of neo-liberalisation and globalisation.

Fundamentalists of all religious colours without exclusion see the family as the only space for women and have in common the exclusion of women from positions of significance or power. Fundamentalist organisations are also claiming to be the

rightful agency with whom negotiations in terms of rights within the community have to take place. It is imperative that the women's movement counters any such claims. It was also pointed out that in the current scenario there is no difference between communalism and fundamentalism as the boundaries have completely blurred.

It was argued that while one needs to give special attention to religious identity in any discussions of minority or majority communalism, the overall approach should focus on women as women, as rights bearers and move forward from there. There is a need to understand communalism more deeply and perhaps develop a new language to counter it. There is also a need for recognition of the burden women bear of carrying the honour and identity of the community.

It was noted that culture and religion could not be separated and one is used to facilitate or legitimise the other. This also showed the link between private and public as, although there is a difference in recognition of rights and their security, the private sphere is actively used to control access and participation in the public sphere. Also the public sphere is constructed in ways that perpetuate gender distinction and bias. Illustrations of these complex inter-linkages between culture and religion in determining the public and private sphere in particular ways were discussed.

Discussions also focused on the nature of access and the legitimacy provided to the participation of women as part of the right wing. This is not the kind of access that the women's movement is striving for and we need to differentiate our position. It was pointed out that the participation of Hindu women in the public sphere in a violent manner during the demolition of the Babri Masjid also brought out into the open the critical need to understand the fundamentalist values and women's agency.

Education was alluded to briefly as well. The education policy of the present government was discussed which seeks to saffronise education. It pretends to be progressive and women friendly policy by speaking of women's equality in education and scientific temper in the policy. The group discussed this double-faced approach and also put forward a series of recommendations for education.

Caste and Difference:

It was argued that the single most important theoretical problem is to analyse the intersection of patriarchy with caste and class to illuminate the oppression of dalit women. A systematic historical, sociological and feminist examination is essential to understand the complex interplay between caste, class and patriarchy by focussing on institutions, cultural systems and ideologies associated with these structures. We need to recognise that the interaction of patriarchy with caste and class does not make for a 'greater' or 'lesser' oppression, but for a qualitatively different type of

oppression. The relationship between the structure of caste and the structure of patriarchy was examined with a view to understanding the specificity of social subordination of dalit women. It was argued that in order to build an Indian theory of patriarchy there is a need to accommodate the difference between women and to take cognisance of commonalities between men and women that bear upon gender power relations within lower caste groups and see the impact of these on women's subjectivities.

The work and ideas of Ambedkar were discussed at some length. There was a brief discussion in this context of the efforts of social reformers to improve the lot of women. It was argued that Ambedkar was deeply concerned about the problems of women. In his analysis of caste, the analysis of women's subordination is subsumed, thus the caste system is the source of women's oppression. He included Articles 14, 15 and 16, which deal with equality in the Indian Constitution. He produced a more radical Hindu Code Bill, doing away with all customary practices in the areas of marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession. It was argued that Ambedkar's views are still relevant to address the complexities of caste and gender in the current scenario and if Ambedkar's emancipatory agenda is combined with the feminist discourse then it will definitely lead to the emancipation of "all women" in our society.

It was pointed out that the philosophies of both Ambedkar and Phule dealt with the management of women's sexuality by high caste patriarchy. With the "tamasha" culture, the brahmin women were regarded as "chaste" and the women from lower castes were considered "available". The rise of the Dalit Panther movement was also discussed in the context that it highlighted caste issues and neglected to address patriarchy within the system. It was also pointed out that the use of the term 'reformer' to describe Ambedkar was incorrect. Instead, Ambedkar has to be described as a 'revolutionary' who attempted to bring about change in the lives of women in general and of the lower caste women in particular.

In the context of a specific study of Chingleput district in Tamil Nadu, there was a focus on dalit culture. Dalit culture was defined in a very broad way including the whole organisation of material life and related the problem of rising violence to the loss of land and common property resources under globalisation. In the present scenario there has also been an impact of issues like dowry, demand for electronic goods and job-oriented education. This trend was counterposed with the heritage of a life-sustaining culture among the dalits in which birth and death were crucial events because of lack of access to properties. This heritage was also connected with the remnants of Buddhist culture which are present in Chingleput district. There was a critique of the gap between dalit movements, which compromise with opportunistic political forces and project a violent rhetoric. It was felt that a life centred culture could more easily connect with an alternative development paradigm which could help dalits to form deeper and more meaningful alliances. In the

discussion it was pointed out that there are several issues that need to be addressed within the dalit community. Dalit adolescent girls are often more educated than the boys who project a macho image thus creating various problems. Girls working in small units are facing harassment from their own community, finding it difficult to get married and facing escalating violence.

There were several discussions around issues of difference particularly at the Mumbai workshop. These were articulated in the context of the hierarchies between upper and lower caste women. Concerns of representation and voice were raised in the context of the women's movement and feminist politics. Various theoretical issues in this regard were discussed. Migration to urban areas as a solution to caste oppression was questioned arguing that living in slums was not liberation.

The evolution of the dalit women's movement which came as a response to the brahmanical overtones of the present women's movement was briefly outlined. It stressed caste differences between women and sought closer caste identity with dalit men. Caste differences among women active in the movement were contextualised within the framework of the "theory of difference" by dalit men and later this was adopted by women theoreticians as well. This theorisation developed into a radical antagonistic stance though "identity politics".

Dalit feminism (including questions of Representation & Reservation):

It was argued, most particularly at the Mumbai workshop that while both dalit feminists and the women's movement emphasise that they are suppressed, deprived and backward, there is a difference in questions of representation. Dalit women have not thus far been given opportunities to represent mainstream women. It was argued that the credibility and contribution of the dalit woman is devalued because she speaks in a local language. The successes and achievements of dalit persons are assumed to be a result of the scheduled status and not on merit. In dalit politics as in general politics, a woman is seen to be an instrument towards some end and not as an individual with rights. The mainstream women's movement's attitude of "we will give and they will receive", in the case of the dalit cause was criticised.

Questions were raised about the intra-dalit relationship: how do gender, caste, class and patriarchy operate within the dalit community? Questions were also raised regarding the caste faction after the Mandal commission and the relation of the *bahujan strivad* with dalit feminism?

It was argued that on the one hand women are used as proxies in politics but at the same time these women in politics do not seem to use this forum to pull up other women with similar backgrounds. That said, it is true that there is not a single political party so far that has listened to a dalit woman who offered suggestions for the whole party. It thus needs to be acknowledged that it is difficult for one dalit

woman to lift others under the given circumstances. Thus, getting more dalit women into the forefront of politics is a slow but steady task. A parallel was drawn between black feminism and dalit feminism as while the former is racism based on colour, the latter is based in caste.

It was also argued that reservation for dalit women in the political scenario needs to be considered within the 33% quota system allocated for women in politics. In this context questions were raised about fragmentation of the dalits as there are Buddhist, Christian and Hindu dalits. One would then have to contend with questions of who is the most victimised as the identity is that of victimhood and this is used as an instrument in party politics.

It also emerged that dalit women would want to branch out more not out of a need for identity but for a conceptual clarity and understanding of the issues encircling them, while at the same time remaining part of the women's movement as a whole. Dalit women should not be viewed only as clients who receive a service; instead an ideology needs to be constructed to understand the complexities of the issue.

On the question of representation it was argued that there is a difference between advocating for victims of violence like Mathura and Rameezabi on the one hand and working towards their representation on the other.

Empowerment:

Issues related to women's empowerment were discussed in terms of its meanings, its economic and political contexts, urban concerns, the relationship between state and civil society in promoting or hindering women's empowerment and the role of NGOs.

The relationship between the state, civil society and women's empowerment was focused upon. The state and various theories relating to the state were discussed. A conceptual framework for the workshop with reference to the Gandhian idea of the 'Ideal State' and the Marxist-Socialist theory of a 'Stateless State' was provided. A stateless state, it was argued, emerges only when the state is under control of the proletariat, only after all forms of exploitation are rooted out and people are properly educated. The relationship between the women's movement and the state was also dwelt on. The question of the Women's Reservation Bill in parliament and state legislatures was raised with the argument that both at the State and National levels, agitations have consistently been pressuring people in power to table the bill. However, it was argued that there is no commitment to the bill which is only intended to create an illusion of equality.

Empowerment in one perception was seen to refer to the entitlement of women to have and exercise power over their lives both as individuals and as members of a social system. There was an effort to analyse the constraints faced in the

empowerment of Indian women and strategies were suggested to overcome the various barriers. The question was raised as to how empowered women were at the end of the year of women's empowerment. It was argued that the new economic situation had led to new ways of exploitation of women. It was suggested that women activists, political leaders and few women's organisations are largely involved in the question of political empowerment ignoring other kinds of empowerment which need to be addressed. The mainstreaming of the entire gamut of issues articulated in the National Policy on Women's Empowerment 2001 is a direct result of civil society interventions and resistance struggles in different parts of the country. Since these systems within civil society are already in place the state should create mechanisms to affirm and support the non-state institutional mechanisms. The need to revalidate the vital role of the women's movement in the reconstruction of Indian society on more pluralistic and egalitarian foundations was also put forward. There was also a focus on urban women and the stereotypes of empowerment as well as dis-empowering gaps within the notions of empowerment.

It was argued that the gender empowerment of women in Indian villages has become absolutely imperative in the present day and that NGOs are working for women's causes and their participation in political, economic and social spheres. In this context, the functioning of the Joint Women's Programme and the Stree Shakti programme and their impact on women of Byahatti village in Hubli were analysed.

In the context of the role of the state it was argued that a positive partnership between state and civil society is necessary in promoting the interests of its citizens and in empowering them. The case of the APMACS (Andhra Pradesh Mutually Aided Co-operative Society Act) of 1995 which, without any ostensible objective of empowering women has succeeded in doing exactly that by facilitating the establishment of self owned and self managed rural banking institutions was cited as an example.

The notion of empowerment was also seen in a metaphorical through a literary analysis of a text, highlighting empowerment as the ability to choose, to exercise options and have choices. The need for training as well as capacity building activities to ensure empowerment of women was also highlighted.

It was argued that empowerment is a myth for poor vulnerable weaker sections of society particularly in a 'third' world democratic country like India and more so in a backward state like Orissa. Even though the Constitution guarantees equality and a dignified life to every citizen, the social, economic and health status of poor women is deplorable. Government welfare schemes rarely reach the women working in the fields and the women in the slums. These marginalised women provide many basic services to the community but are never taken into account when planning for the global economy.

It was pointed out that there could be no conclusive definitions or recipes for empowerment. Nor does empowerment signify a specific goal towards which the state and civil society must evolve but is a conceptual notion that entails a process orientation and can this in itself be a process and an end. Empowerment, it has been determined, is an ongoing phenomenon involved in the attainment of equality in economic, educational, health, social and political sectors. It includes but is not restricted to the removal of constraints imposed by patriarchal structures/ ideologies safeguarding women against the various forms of violence, the drafting of gender sensitive policies, and ensuring effective legislation.

Media:

The linkages of the media with globalisation both in terms of technology and projected imagery were discussed. It was argued that we should examine both the positive effects (access to information and more assertive and articulate role models) and the negative effects (women projected in either stereotypical *pativrata* roles or as sex objects) of the media. Globalisation has no ideology of its own and takes on the popular language - for instance advertisements for foreign goods use stereotypical images of Indian women. It was felt that the media has also been impacted adversely by globalisation.

It was argued that the media perpetuates gender stereotypes which strengthen the invisibility of women's contribution to society. Statistical data was provided which suggested that women working in Doordarshan are confined to the lower levels of the organisation and do not have decision making positions.

The construction of women and women's bodies through fashion, through the selling of consumer durables, and through "confessional" columns were delineated. Television, particularly, it was argued, projects women with an unnaturally magnified capacity for enduring suffering. In regard to the stereotyped roles in which women are projected, alternate modes were suggested which could be used to depict women realistically as human beings with a sense of self worth and identity outside of defined roles. The links between globalisation, consumerism, pornography and violence against women were also discussed.

The strategic role of the media and the need to engage with it in a critical and informed manner, and re-educate ourselves of its priorities as the media is not a neutral actor were discussed. A need was articulated to objectively analyse media messages in the context of globalisation, fundamentalism and stereotyping of roles of the marginalised. Also the danger of communal symbols and consumer lifestyles projected by the media needs to be analysed and seen in the present socio-economic scenario.

Sexuality:

Concerns relating to sexuality included the issues concerning sexual and reproductive rights, sexual harassment, trafficking in women and girls and the appropriation of issues by the Hindu Right Wing.

It was highlighted that we need to address the socialisation of women through a patriarchal ideology. It was argued that there is a need to address issues of reproductivity in ways that allow women to view themselves and their bodies in a positive light. There is also a need to impart sex education and give young women an understanding about rights in relation to their bodies and sexuality.

In regard to health and population concerns it was pointed out that women were only addressed in the context of their reproductive capacities, the attempt being to control these. Population control measures have also been targeted at women. Women often internalise notions of shame about their own bodies and deny themselves pleasure or pride. An appeal was made to place the health issue on the agenda of the women's movement in a big way.

The issue of eve teasing and the problem of violent and insulting language was also addressed. There were discussion around the issue of trafficking of women and girls in Orrisa. This was based on a study that the Task force on women and violence undertook in 15 selected districts in Orissa. Poor socio-economic conditions, discrimination against minorities, unequal treatment of women/girl children, lack of economic viability, education and legal protection are some of the reasons that make women and girls vulnerable.

It was argued that even today women's bodies and their sexuality are flash point issues which have no global consensus. In the context of beauty contests for instance there has been an appropriation of issues by the right wing. It was pointed out that the women's movement has to make a sustained effort to construct a language which is not vulnerable to being co-opted by the right wing and which can ensure that the issues are understood from our perspective.

Movement:

Concerns regarding the women's movement and the crisis juncture at which it finds itself in the early part of the 21st century threaded almost all discussions in the six workshops. Many of these were located around countering the various challenges posed by the Hindu right wing and the market forces. The movement has also been forced in the last decade and more to contend with questions of identity politics.

It was pointed out we have to acknowledge that there is no single movement. While we are talking about a movement of differences we must also reiterate that there are also several commonalties.

Another discussion centred on the labelling of the Indian women's movement as western and question its "Indianness". It was argued that this group of feminist bashers view Indian culture as fixed and unchanging in which an upper middle class idea of culture serves to substitute as the national culture to which all are imagined to conform. Their understanding of what the feminist movement stands for is sexual freedom, destruction of families, support for lesbianism and so on. There is no acknowledgement of issues such as imbalances in sex ratio, high female illiteracy, feminisation of poverty, gender discrimination in the labour markets, which the Indian women's movement has highlighted. It was argued that a feminist politics that can challenge the onslaught of this group of interlocutors needs to highlight the inequalities and oppressive social and gender relations within a framework that captures both diversities and dynamics of cultural processes and retains the authenticity of grassroots women's experiences.

The point was also made that applying labels like 'brahmanical' and 'elite feminists' to women leaders of dalit women's movement to connote the process of sanskritization is derogatory and demeaning. It was strongly felt that efforts need to be made to involve dalit women in the women's movement.

In the context of empowering civil society it was argued that there is a need to revalidate the vital role of the women's movements in the reconstruction of Indian civil society on more pluralistic, egalitarian foundations. It is important for the women's movement to forge alliances with other social groups and to investigate the relationship religion, communalism, caste and politics if and to rearticulate the role of women in Indian society. In this context we need to take serious cognisance of differences and discriminations based on class, caste and religion.

Citing case studies it was pointed out that Orissa has witnessed a large number of protest movements but these have been largely localised and present a fragmented picture. Among these are the Gopalpur movement and the Kashipur movement, which were localised and not part of any comprehensive large movement and therefore not able to capture the essence of the fight against globalisation. This was in part due to Orissa's rigidly hierarchical society. In Orissa, tribals, dalits and women constitute the largest number but are the most marginalised. Issues of social reform, caste, etc are not components of any of these movements and they are dominated by a patriarchal ideology. In order for a women's movement to come about we need to address the religious conservative ideology which is prevalent. In this it was argued, there is a lesson to be learnt from the less conservative tribal and dalit ideologies. We have closed our minds to these alternative cultural modes existing in our society from which women have much to gain.

It was argued that there was a need for women's groups to seek common grounds and agendas with other movements like the displaced people's movement, health movement, environmental movement. It is only through working together that we

can collectively hope for a progressive change. It was argued that intellectual property rights and rights of access to resources like food, fodder, and fuel are the basis of all movements. This necessitates the need to build an alliance on commonalities. Different movements have their own specific objectives and strengths but they have a common focus, to ensure that water, electricity, fodder and fuel remain with the people. The threat of globalisation and the need to converge concerns across movements while maintaining the specificity and identity of each struggle/ movement were emphasised.

Concluding Observations

Reflections on issues of globalisation, identity politics and violence, articulating various complex and multifaceted linkages often raised concerns regarding the various challenges facing women's studies in the contemporary scenario.

It was felt that women's studies had focused on labour participation during the seventies and on the 'double burden' and intra-household discrimination in the 1980s. In the nineties the impact of globalisation, has meant the destruction of the resource base, property rights and the inter-play of caste-class and gender. Women's studies faces new ethical challenges in this situation. We have to cope with a receding state, expanding markets and uncertain family and community structures. A strong statement was made in regard to pedagogic practice arguing that there is a need to sensitise teachers and students in order to foster both critical research and action.

It was pointed out that we in the women's studies need to focus on theory building and that there have not been adequate efforts on the part of Indian feminists in this direction. Arguments focused on what constitutes theory and the ethical and disciplinary contexts of such theories. This would be useful to feminism, as it would provide us a broad conceptual framework within which to locate the particular. This of course is not to suggest that the particular cannot be theorised by itself. For instance it was pointed out that dalit feminism could be compared with black feminism in such a framework because of the similarities of the issues addressed by both movements. There is a need for theory it was argued, as we are not just women in compartment in the train of history, we would like to know where it is heading and have some say in the direction.

The regional workshops have played an important role in setting the agenda and laying the groundwork for the October conference in Bhubaneswar.

STATE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SOUTHERN REGION CONFERENCE REPORT

Organised by

**The Department of Women's Studies,
NMKRV College for Women, Bangalore,**

In Collaboration With

The Indian Association for Women's Studies

30th November & 1st December 2001

**K S Umadevi*
Ms.Pushpa Reddy#**

The conference provided the platform for dialogue between state's representatives, civil society participants and academicians, to discern, to what extent women's empowerment is possible in the 'true sense', given the situation and conditions of women in India. Today, especially with the onslaught of globalisation and increasing fundamentalism of various types. The concept of women's empowerment has to be expounded upon in the context of persistent patriarchal practices and ideologies, current market forces, continuous and pernicious forms of violence against women, a prejudicial media, a failing health-care system, structural adjustment policies and the numerous developmental strategies currently in implementation. The participants and paper writers at the conference included academics, NGO activists and advocates, grass root functionaries, and State Government representatives from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Prof. K.S.Umadevi, Principal, NMKRV College for Women, cordially welcomed the delegates and participants to the conference. Thereafter, Prof. Rameshwari Varma, IAWS Treasurer, briefly explained the history of the IAWS. She reiterated some issues from her background note to the conference which needed to be expanded upon in the conference, as well as highlighting many pertinent questions that also needed redress/addressing. She expressed a fervent desire for meaningful dialogue on the multifaceted topic, and for determining of the extent to which NGOs and the women's movement have made strides with regard to women's empowerment.

The key note address, delivered by Dr. Renu Mukunda, a Consultant on Community development and Gender Issues, provided a conceptual framework for the conference,

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with reference to the Gandhian idea of the "Ideal State" and the Marxist-Socialist theory of a "Stateless State". She added that a stateless state, emerging only when the state is under control of the proletariat, is possible only after all forms of exploitations are rooted out and people properly educated. Once this is accomplished, then the civil society would gradually take over the functions of the state, which would naturally, inevitably wither away. But until then, the state should be all-powerful for defending life and the interests of the people. She questioned whether the state represented the genuine aspirations of its people the state being such an omnipotent and omnipresent force. She warned of the ill effects on the masses when the state abdicates its true responsibility to socialism and begins to cater to the dictates of the market forces and the ever increasing exploitative, global powers of multinational corporations. Dr. Mukunda further reiterated that the women's movement, a major non-violent and creative determining phenomenon in the fight of the exploited, in this century, has set in motion a liberating force which cannot be reversed. Feminist discourses have enabled us to rethink, re-examine and re-evaluate our assumptions and practices and to expose violence, atrocities and hopelessly self-destructive values of patriarchy. Together, feminist discourse and the women's movement, hold the potential to radicalize our understanding further. She concluded her comprehensive address with the following thought-provoking issues: - the concepts of power, achievement, productivity, work, control over social and natural resources are all the values, the markers of a patriarchal order, the values of a system dominated by the masculinity principle, standing in the way of a non-oppressive world. The question is whether our attempts for empowerment of women are to be integrated within the patriarchal order or are going to subvert it?

The first paper of the first session of the conference, entitled "Empowerment of Women in the Indian context: A Sociological Analysis", was presented by Dr. D.K.Sudha, Lecturer in Sociology, Bhadravathi, Karnataka. She stated that empowerment of women refers to the entitlement of women to have and exercise power over their lives, both as individuals and the members of a social system. Her paper was an effort at analysis of the constraints in the empowerment of Indian women and she provided a number of possible strategies with which to overcome these barriers. Patriarchy, traditional patterns of socialisation, economic backwardness, corruption, power politics, lack of women leaders and the indifferent attitude of women towards their development were the constraints she identified as hampering and retarding empowerment of women. She categorically stated, therefore, that the empowerment of women in the state appears to be a myth.

The second paper, on "Globalisation, Feminization and Women Empowerment", by Dr. Chaya Degaonkar, Department of Economics, Gulbarga University, Karnataka, focused upon the process of globalisation as taking over labour. The relationship between state, labour and capital has had a radical paradigmatic shift in the recent years, she argued, with the global capital imposing over domestic capital, resulting

in changes in production structures. Her paper analysed the specific impact of this on women's labour in agriculture induced by these structural changes. There has been a steady feminisation of work in South India in agriculture, but within the context of globalisation, and there are no significant indicators to show any significant trends in empowerment of women. She concluded by advocating a revolutionary reform in institutions of feudal social structures.

Dr. M.Jamuna, Professor, Department of History, Bangalore University, raised, in the third paper, on "Empowerment of Women - Precept and Practice", the question: what and how empowered are women at the end of the year of Women's Empowerment? She added that with the emergence of neo-capitalist imperialism, women are subject to new types of exploitations. The paper explored the deleterious and debilitating effects of increases in rape, crimes against women, dowry deaths, sexual exploitation, infanticide, sex imbalances, increased use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques and child marriages. She finds that female activists, political leadership and a few women's organisations are mainly concerned with the question of political empowerment, pushing the realities of women's plight into darkness. Her recommendations are that: unless sincere efforts are made not to scuttle government schemes at the bureaucratic and political levels; until patriarchal forces are curbed and an attitudinal change in both sexes is brought in, and serious awareness is generated at the grass roots level; until useful and effective laws are brought in, all talk of empowerment and equal rights would be hypocritical, meaningless and an exercise in futility.

"Empowering the Indian State and Civil Society - Perspective on the Reconfiguration of Women", by Dr. K.S.Vaishali, Department of English, Bangalore University, argued that the mainstreaming of the entire gamut of issues articulated in the National Policy on Women's Empowerment 2001, is a direct result of civil society interventions and resistance struggles in different parts of the country. Dr. Vaishali further substantiated that since these systems within civil society are already in place and doing the work, the state should create mechanisms to affirm and support the non-state institutional mechanisms. The paper concluded that there is a need to revalidate the vital role of women's movements in the reconstruction of Indian Civil Society on more pluralistic, egalitarian foundations and to forge alliances between women's and other social groups. It is also important to investigate the relationship between religion, communalism, caste and politics and to rearticulate the role of women in Indian Society, and take serious cognisance of the differences and discriminations based on class, caste and religion, if the question on Indian women's empowerment is to be satisfactorily answered.

The second session of day one began with a paper presented by Dr. R.Rathnakumari, Centre for Women's Studies, Andhra University, Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, entitled "The Role of State in Women's Empowerment - A Case Study of Andhra

Pradesh". She stated that the construction of gender is a matter of both social construction and cultural representation. Even after half a century of Independence, the status of women is still not even close to the desirable, and the data of various agencies clearly indicate that empowerment is still a far cry for the average Indian women. She stated that the effectiveness or even desirability of the state interventions remains a critical question because the construction and reinforcement of gender roles, the mediation of women's access to resources and decision-making powers are largely located within the family household and community. She cited the case study of A.P as an illustration of the significant role of the Government of Andhra Pradesh for women's empowerment.

The second paper on "Custom Made Bahus and Barbies" by Dr. Sindhu Menon, Department of English, Bangalore University, indicated that the role of the media in relation to women's issues is an ambivalent one. She used the mode of advertising in the media to show how the stereotyping of women is reinforced through new means. The commodification of women in the electronic and press media are continually perpetuating role stereotypes and are guilty of pigeon-holing women into increasingly pre-defined and narrow slots. She concluded her paper with some alternate modes that can be used to depict women realistically and as human beings with self worth.

"Pornography - A Violence against Women", the third paper in the session presented by Smt. S.P.Srimathi, Department of Women's Studies, NMKRV College, Bangalore, focused on how globalisation and consumerism are interlinked to the concept "violence" and its relatedness to women. She postulated that Pornography is a form of violence against women, it being defined as "images and representations divorced from social reality and as production, consumption and distribution of pictures/ words". It thus perpetuates a system of ideas and beliefs that are constitutive of male power which leads to the subordination of women who are into pornography or who are forced to work, live or be educated in an environment flooded with pornography.

The concluding paper of the first day was "the Question of Women's Empowerment in the True Sense", by Dr. K.G.Bhuvana Maheshwari, Department of English, Bangalore University. She focussed on urban women and the stereotypes of empowerment as well as the dis-empowering gaps within the notions of empowerment, citing examples. The paper examined and explored in depth the awareness of empowerment as a moment-by-moment regeneration of one's strengths alongside the parallel structures of women's empowerment to patriarchal equivalents.

The first paper in session one on the second day of the conference entitled "Women's Bill, An Intervention in State Policy", was delivered by Dr. Meera Chakravarthy, Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Bangalore University. Her paper raised the

question of the Women's Reservation Bill in parliament and stated that, at both the State and National levels, agitations have consistently been pressuring people in power to table the Bill. However, the men in governance present the bill now and then to create an illusion of propriety and equality. She adds that inequality is increasing all the time and that the exploitation of women has much to do with the power relations and economic exploitation in social relations and social structures. The gravity of the problem is becoming last in the quagmire of empty talks, and she feels that the policy on Reservation is merely formulated to avert 'conflict'. It was laid aside in legislative and became dead by omission. Reservation, she said, is a moral issue and there is a need to create pockets of quota for women. Being imbued with the patriarchal concepts, the policy of reservations is thus an illusion - and empowerment therefore becomes an empty manifesto.

This was followed by "changing socio-economic profile of Rural Women - Role of JWP and Stree-Shakti", presented by Dr. Shree S. Herlekar, Hubli. The gender empowerment of women in Indian villages has become absolutely imperative in the present day and the NGOs are working for women's causes and their participation in political, economical and social spheres, in this direction. The Joint Women's Programme, as one such organisation, is spreading awareness about women's socio-political and economic rights. The paper analysed the functioning of the Stree-Shakti programme and the activities of JWP and their impact on women of Byahatti Village, Hubli. She highlighted, in depth, the problems and constraints related to the motivation and interaction of JWP with the women, listed its achievement in the village and put forward some strong recommendations for the future implementation of such programmes.

Dr. K.G. Uma, Professor, Department of Sociology, Bangalore University, and Director - Centre for Women's Studies, delivered the next paper on "Women's Perception and Utilisation of Health Care, Facilities for Reproductive Health Care - A Case Study in Karnataka". There is a general apathy on the part of women towards their own health, as well as on the part of the Government with regard to women's health issues. Because of the patriarchal order in which women live, together with the socio-economic conditions of their lives, women tend to neglect their health, nutrition and issues related to occupational hazards. However, public health programmes and primary health centres created and managed by male doctors are inefficient, bureaucratic and steeped in paternalistic notions. The study conducted in Chitradurga district, by Dr. Uma, shows the women generally neglect their own health because of total absorption in family issues as first priority, lack of female doctors at PHC and the high cost of medicines that are not available at PHCs. She provided comprehensive statistics on the study and followed these with many valid recommendations for improving PHCs with regard to women's health issues.

The next paper on "Enabling legislation, Empowering Institutions, Women and Thrift

co-operatives in Andhra Pradesh - A Perspective” by Smt. Sandhya Kanneganti, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, states that a positive partnership between state and civil society is incumbent in promoting the interests of its citizens and in empowering them. Her paper cites the case of APMACS Act (Andhra Pradesh Mutually Aided Co-operative Society Act) of 1995, which, without any ostensible objective of empowering women, has done exactly that, empowered them - by facilitating women’s establishment of self-owned and self-managed rural banking institutions. In the process, it empowered them through psychological confidence, social recognition, economic strength and acquisition of managerial skills. The Women’s Thrift Co-operative, promoted by the Co-operative Development Foundation, under APMACS Act, 1995, provided the impetus to some 40,000 women in the Karimnagar and Warangal districts in Andhra Pradesh.

The last paper in this session, entitled, “Of Walls and Women”, by Vimala Rama Rao, Professor and Head of the Department of English, Bangalore University, presented a metaphorical examination of the notion of empowerment through a literary analysis of a text. She highlighted empowerment as the ability to choose, to exercise options and to have choice. The state, she says, has various schemes to empower women. She discusses one such scheme, which benefits a marginalised woman, whose option to own a home is juxtaposed with a national disaster in a sensitive short story written by Bolavar Mohammed Kunhi in Kannada.

“Health Empowerment of Indian Women in the context of Globalisation” The first paper of the penultimate session of the closing day of the conference was presented by Dr. K.Saroja, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development, College of Rural Home Science, Dharwad. She raised the question of women’s empowerment in terms of health in the global economic context, with regard to the new Economic Policy which involves cutting costs on health, education and social spending, the privatisation of medical care, increase in medical costs, and the flooding of the Indian market by Transnational Pharmaceutical Companies. Globalisation is impacting negatively on women’s health, both directly and indirectly. She advocates many measures to rectify the situation, the main one being a gender sensitive public health policy to achieve gender equity and inclusive of health issues and health programmes. Hence all policies should be gender sensitive, comprehensive, universal in nature, portable and accessible.

The next topic “Towards True Empowerment of Women”, by Sri. K.S.Narayan, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, covered broad issues in lieu of empowering women, from social to economic to political aspects. He highlighted the need for training, as well as capacity building activities, to ensure the empowerment of women.

The last speaker of the final session of the conference, Dr. Shreemathi, Hampi University, spoke on “Women’s Body, Sexuality and Empowerment”. The concept of

presenting women, as it is at present, is one of a 'weak' individual. Women need to be empowered to become 'strong' beings. She highlighted issues on socialisation of women through ideas; looked at capacity of reproduction of women as empowering, spoke on sex education and the need to appreciate the power released through puberty. She maintains that this would indeed be of immense psychological power to a young girl.

During the Valedictory session, on the final day, a panel discussion was held, and was chaired by Prof. Rameshwari Verma where ideas on empowerment of women were outlined. The panelists were: Dr. Gabriel, Dr. B.Rathnakumari, Andhra University; Dr. Revathi Narayanan, State Programme Director, Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka; Dr. Shakuntala Narasimhan, Journalist, Bangalore and Dona Fernandes, Founder - Vimochana, Bangalore. A collective effort at arriving at some conclusions was the task of this panel. Amongst others, Dr. S. Narasimhan gave input on the media issue and women's portrayal; Smt. Dona Fernandes spoke vociferously on the issue of violence against women and Dr. Revathi gave a detailed, incisive report on the successes of the Mahila Samakhya Project. Dr. Gabriel, drew the attention of the house to the dangers of the present development paradigm and particularly its disastrous effects on women. She said the people's movements must take up these issues and work for a new development paradigm.

The Valedictory address was delivered by Smt. Madhura Chatrapathy, Trustee, Director, Asian Centre for Entrepreneurial Institute, Bangalore, who spoke at length on entrepreneurship and women, citing some interesting examples. In the final analysis, empowerment has to be seen as having taken on an enormous task but with no conclusive, clear cut and definitive definition emerging at the end. Empowerment does not, however, signify a specific goal towards which the state and civil society must evolve, but is a very conceptual notion that entails a process orientation and can thus in itself be a process and an end. Empowerment, it has been determined, is an ongoing phenomenon highly involved in the attainment of and by equity in economic, educational, health, social and political sectors. Also important are the removal of constraints imposed by patriarchal structures/ideologies; 'safeguarding' women against the various forms of violence by various methods; the drafting of gender sensitive policy/strategies and ensuring that effective legislation input into place.

The complexity of the problem of empowerment defies any easy solutions and easy answers. What emerged from this conference is the need for both, structures of the state and those institutions within civil society, to negotiate a set of workable solutions in the pursuit of equality, equity and a nation of empowered individuals.

MULTICULTURALISM AND GENDER ISSUES NORTHERN REGION CONFERENCE REPORT

Organized by

Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

and

Institute for Women's Studies, Lucknow University

In Collaboration with

The Indian Association for Women's Studies

28th to 30th September 2001

Dr. Roop Rekha Verma*

Day 1:

Inaugural Session

The first day began with the inaugural panel, addressed by Professor Roop Rekha Verma, as the co-ordinator for the conference. Dr. Zarina Bhatti, the Chairperson of the Indian Association for Women's Studies, Dr. Kumud Sharma, Senior Fellow, CWDS, and Ms. Zohra Chatterjee, Secretary, Women and Child Development. Dr. Kumkum Sangari delivered the keynote address. The panel provided a unique opportunity to the participants to understand the positing of Multiculturalism, in the context of present attempts of homogenisation and structuring "one national identity" and ramifications of these for women.

Prof. Roop Rekha Verma welcomed the delegates who had arrived in Lucknow despite the violent conditions created in the city on the eve of the Conference. This showed commitment of the participants to the women's cause. Prof. R. R. Verma, contextualised the Conference by her reference to the current events of fundamentalist terrorism on the one hand, and the threat of war on the other. She emphasised that war could never be an option - not even the last option, and exhorted the Conference to pass a resolution for global peace. " However inaudible our voice may be, it is strong because it is women's voice", she said.

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Dr. Zarina Bhatti, in her remarks as the President of the IAWS pointed towards the historic juncture at which the Conference was taking place. She referred to the Black Tuesday, which witnessed the destructive might of technology that could destroy, even annihilate civilisation itself. Terrorism is an extreme form of protest borne out of deprivations and frustrations caused by an economically and socially inequitable social order. Interestingly enough it is fuelled both by the powerful and the powerless. The competing power seekers co-opt the poor uneducated people by inflaming ethnic and religious fervour in them, and breed hatred and intolerance in the minds of men, women and children, she said. Dr. Bhatti said that the new breed of fundamentalists that is emerging in our country, both in the majority and minority community is promoting religion-based identities and separatism. Certain political forces are trying to erode the very foundation of Indian society, which is based on diversity of religions and cultures.

The conceptualisation of Indian culture and tradition has placed women in central position. Indian womanhood has been perceived differently at different junctures in history. In the context of the recent rhetoric of revivalism, Indian woman is required to uphold the ancient virtues of modesty, chastity and sacrifice. Thus the imposition of dress code on women and disfiguring young women's faces who dared ignore the dictates of the fundamentalists. She further said that the variety of faces, the languages, the dresses, the architectural styles, the cuisine, the music that is found on the Indian landscape has been unique in the world. And it is this very uniqueness that is under siege. It is in response to this threat to our composite culture to our enormous capacity to absorb and accommodate differences, and to welcome choices, that we women have to devote our energies to counter these threats.

Dr. Bhatti opined that women and women's movement have a dual role to play. In the first instances women must resist to be co-opted by the fundamentalist forces who are trying to lure them in the name of religion secondly the women's movements through their advocacy programs have to expose the disruptive forces and safeguard cherished goals of secularism. Dr. Bhatti ended her address by exhorting participants to join IAWS and by reciting a couplet by Majaz:

tere maanthe pe yeh aanchal bahut hi khub hai lekin
tu is aanchal se ek parcham bana leti toh accha tha

Ms. Chatterjee, expressed her eagerness to learn the issues related to Multiculturalism. She emphasised the need to evolve ways and means to involve grass roots women in the entire exercise.

Dr. Kumkum Sangari in her Keynote address focused on the usage of multiculturalism and its academic genesis as strategic theory, and its understanding of gender. She began by raising a few questions such as what could multiculturalism mean? Is it a term, or an idea? Is it more democratic to be a multiculturalist than

not? Is it an idea, which comes from below or is it forwarded by the state? Dr. Sangari said that the term "multiculturalism" was mainly located in academic discourse, recognising certain definitions, which recognise feminist influences. The term itself was used to define the condition of immigrants from the third world to the first world. It stressed the importance of recognising difference, and meant to say that first one must recognise the difference in culture and then foster respect for the difference. This leads to the next question, as to who is to recognise the difference? For example, the Black Caribbean culture was recognised as existing alongside the white European culture. It was hierarchically below. Its usage however did give legitimacy to the immigrants in Europe and other parts of first world to have their voices heard. In looking for legitimacy for difference, we can recognise the British as the strongest proponents of diversity except that they saw diversity as chaos, and their own role to ensure order in it. As such their understanding of diversity was hemmed by their desire for streamlining it. The Indian census of 1892 clearly shows that the people of India did not know the religion they belonged to. They could only identify sects or particular gods' etc. but did not view themselves as belonging to a particular religion. The British, not being able to make sense of this, then tried to freeze identities. So while on the one hand, the British understanding does satisfy the liberal approach of identifying difference, the recognition on the other hand, is not sufficient, if we do not argue for its continuance. The post-modern understanding of multiculturalism, Dr. Sangari said, accepts boundaries and distinctions, and argues for continuity of difference and its acceptance.

However, if we examine the Post modernist approach, it has to admit that it has been completely fluid, which while giving certain openness is marred by being unable to define anything at all. Further, she said, at present looking at India, we would need to accept that we do have a strange mixing of orthodoxy with technical understanding of the issues. Within this, there are attempts to homogenise. For instance, the usage of the Hindutva identity, and wide-ranging attempts to equate religion with culture, saying both are the same, despite clear evidence that it is not so. Trying to link this entire homogenisation debate with ethnicity, given that we never had the wide-setter rule, no tribes, etc. our own perception of ethnicity per se, is difficult. Ethnicity would be a usable rationale for example, with the aborigines who used the ethnic language for their experience. But it can hardly be said for the Hindus, even though the dalits might use the same language to express their experience. This brings us to our perception of separateness. In France, the Arab women continue to wear purdah. There is an attempt to cast the separateness. For instance, the Victorian prudery, so strictly practiced, was often an attempt to distinguish the British women from Indian, which lent it self to the whole issue of "us and them". As such, this is not so white and black, as decisions on women's issues are dependent on the interconnectedness of one nation to another. It is in this backdrop, that we need to talk of sisterhood, rather than "us and them" in all

situations, Dr. Sangari maintained.

Cautioning against the confusion between multiplicity and multiculturalism she said that it was critical that multiplicity should not be confused with democracy. The co-existence of cultures/differences should not be mistaken for multiculturalism either. Further, multiculturalism itself cannot be used as a holdall for all democratic values, or to signify democracy itself. Democracy must mean more than this. In the marketing of globalisation, the usage of multicultural language is a symbol of how it can be used for very undemocratic and anti-people end. The current trend, flowing from globalisation, of piecemeal production has led to the location of female labour in the centre, the rationale being it is cheap, insecure and available. This has meant an increase in domestic home-based labour, with related cutbacks in service for the old, children and other groups.

At the end Dr. Sangari, pointed out how the market forces had joined hands with the Hindu right, and have, despite a note on so called openness, have meant a return to and a strengthening of, patriarchal values, which has meant that we will be losing the war. This perhaps is the answer to the question of how come the Hindu right is stepping up the fight for globalisation.

Dr. Kumud Sharma gave vote of thanks, and noted that Dr. Sangari had set the tone for the conference, by linking academic discourse to practical usage of theory, and its strategic nature.

Plenary Session I: Fundamentalism and Gender

Dr. Indu Agnihotri, an Activist and a Professor of History, and Dr. Urvashi Butalia, activist and author led the panel on this issue.

Dr. Indu Agnihotri underlined the relevance of the present discussion, as it brings forth the current issue, which are challenges before all of us. Tracing the history of communalism and fundamentalism, she noted that communalism came to us in the garb of fundamentalism. There is different kind of fundamentalism. However, we need to recognise that it is embedded in society and in religion. It is important to understand the relationship, as it is a political linkage. We must understand that we are up against a very political fight, and as such it is important to discuss the historical context and the embeddedness of the issue.

Dr. Agnihotri said that fundamentalism needs religion for it to exist, although it is not a feature of religion. It tries to draw legitimacy from a certain glorious past. The entire discourse is to return to that past glory, which most often never existed. The discourse is based on and directed towards an evocation of a mythical past; this is true of whatever religion we look at. There is an attempt to say that there was an ideal moment of the religion to which we must return. Even though, there has never

been any such historical moment, as at all moments religion has been in a process of evolution of practices, philosophies, etc., which does not provide or make for a rigid model. For example, there was no Vedic period, which was decisive. The whole of the Hindu past has been mostly transitory on the shaky basis of which is structured the present attempt to project homogeneity of religion. So in one period there was heterogeneity of thought, approaches. There was no homogeneity of the practitioners at any point. A similar trend can be noted in case of Islam. The beliefs of the system have to be rooted in the existing practices of the society in which it was rooted. So gender relations were pre-existent to societies, within which religion was intervening. As such the historical context has to be understood to understand the contemporary battles, which we are fighting.

To the question how do the fundamentalists image women, Dr. Agnihotri's answer was: as social burdens, as separate entities from the social life. There is a commonality of perception, which envisions women as non-producers. This is also a clear contradiction of the reality of today or ever, in terms of what women truly are. There is enough historical evidence of women's contribution, which is obvious. But is still ignored. The myths around women as non-producers have been contradicted with enough historical evidence to show the kind of role women have played in terms of socio-economic contributors: women as farmers, as labourers, as dasis etc. However, the entire battle of controlling women is being fought by fundamentalists by imaging women as non-producers, Dr. Agnihotri maintained. Dr. Agnihotri said that it was in this context that we must examine the present capitalist market, and understand the re-entry of women in the market. This illustrates the contradiction between the movement and fundamentalism. Family has been the scene of battle, as the fundamentalists see the family as the only space for women. This is clearly shown by the overlap in statements about women by all fundamentalists Hindus/Muslims/Christians/Sikhs. Although there is a difference in the specificities of each there is a commonality in the exclusion of women.

On the other hand, Dr. Agnihotri said, the fundamentalist organisations are claiming to be the only power with which the negotiations in terms of rights within the community have to take place. In this way, the women's movement stands against the fundamentalists of all hues. Given this context we do need to move away from seeing Islamic fundamentalism as merely reactionary, however, that does not take away from the fact that the discourse of Hindutva is even more threatening as it claims the power of the majority. There is a booklet titled "Adarsh Ghar". And it talks about an ideal home. The inhabitant of this model home are living in a joint family system, where the younger members are subservient to the elders, women keep to housework, while men go out and earn. Sons follow in the footsteps of their fathers and take on the same profession as the father. This clearly idealises the family based occupation model, which is obviously class-based, evocative of the caste divisions, without any space for gender and dalit realities. The booklet also

attempts to present a homogenised vision of womanhood, regardless of their realities, seeking to posit one role of women as the most ideal, as opposed to others. The book seeks to present views, which takes us back to caste-based work, and a vision that takes away rights. Dr. Agnihotri reiterated the linkage between fundamentalism and globalisation, in which globalisation is marketed as something indigenous and is used to market a vision that negates rights and equality.

Dr. Urvashi Butalia, proposed to examine fundamentalism from women's side and look at the history of these concepts and the response of women. Earlier, there were very clear commitments about keeping Communalism and Fundamentalism apart. Now we clearly state that it is one and the same thing. While earlier we had said that the entire discourse of the Hindu Right is a communal phenomenon, now it is clear that it is the same thing as fundamentalism. Dr. Butalia said that today, there is a new fundamentalism, symbolised by Mr. George Bush, who is defining 'us and them' in which the 'us' is a military power. The homogenisation of Islam with terrorism is a new gift, which fits the Hindu agenda perfectly. There does seem to be a linkage of violence with men who are seeking linkages with religion. So, at present the only voices for peace are the voices of women. For example the peace plea of the Women of Kosovo, which is based on their own experience, and asks America to grieve of its dead and engage with reconstruction not war.

Dr. Bhutalia maintained that it was critical to understand the role of the women's movement vis a vis the entire issue of fundamentalism. She admitted that there was no one movement, and those we are talking about movement of differences, and also a kind of commonality.

She pointed out that Muslim women or women as Muslims whenever an issue or rather the identity of women as belonging to communities was not an issue in the campaigns that took place in the late 70s.80s and even into the 90s prior to 1992. The Anti-rape campaign revolved around 2-3 cases, prominent among which was the Hyderabad case of Rameeza Bi, where she was raped and her husband killed, and still the court referred to her as a prostitute. The other cases were the Mathura rape case, Suman Rani, Kusum Tyagi. Followed by Bhanwari Devi, at the time no one (at least in the movement) saw women as holder of religious identities, being more concerned with the abuse itself. The only time that identity was relevant was more to do with caste, as there were gang rapes of dalit women. In the dowry campaign there was an assumption, that dowry somehow was a Hindu issue. However not much attention was paid to the Muslim angle, as the issue was dowry. Even in the subsequent movements, like Chipko, arrack etc. the focus was the issue, and women were central.

Dr. Bhutalia pointed out that the first time women's religious identity became an issue was in the Shah Bano case. It was now that the Muslim women took to streets against the judgment granting maintenance to Muslim wives, and in favour of the

Personal law. The Movement responded by doing pro-Shah Bano demonstrations, which were very obviously peopled by Muslim women, often being led by women in *burkhas*. It is interesting to note the compulsion here to take on the identity, and the entire discourse, which raised the central question of who can speak for whom. This dilemma also surfaced during the Sati campaign. At this time also the women campaigning for Sati used their identity as Hindu women, and as such the campaigners against Sati also used their Hindu identities, seeking to use the same language to respond to the questions being raised about who is speaking for whom. There was of course time when women leading the movement were called western, as well as alienated from their roots. Even at that time, there were attempts to claim a more grass-root identity. We have to be careful not to fall in the same trap. However, this positioning is not happening in a vacuum. There is a context, which is deciding priorities and political stances for the movement, Dr. Bhutalia maintained.

The change in the voice of the movement participating in the debate on the Uniform Civil Code took place precisely due to a realisation of rising consciousness on the issue of identity. There was a clear hijacking of the discussion on Uniform Civil Code by the BJP, in addition to other issues, and the language of the movement was quick in responding, so as to distance and distinguish itself from the BJP. However this has meant that we re-examine our belief about the unity of women, and consider the women being used as interns for fundamentalism and also distinguish ourselves from them. For instance, while we always spoke about women access to the public sphere, the use of the public sphere by women like Uma Bharti, Sadhavi Rithambra showed us clearly, that we meant a different kind of access than being advocated for women by the BJP. So we had to explain what we meant by access and participation. However, there are certain areas in which these kinds of questions are never raised, for instance family planning, reproduction etc.

Taking the example of Kashmir issue, Dr. Bhutalia pointed out that it has been seen largely as a "nationalist" issue, and the rise of fundamentalism has exhibited itself twice over now, especially in the imposition of the dress code. It is important to look at the women's movement's responses to Kashmir. There is not enough critique of "nationhood" and "nationalism". She said that it was important to notice the disintegration being experienced and recognise that forced dress code (which is unacceptable) is not the only form of violence being experienced by women.

The most important question, she said, was where do we go from here. We need to link-up with other movements to see what is the nature of the strategies if any, to address the crosscutting issues of caste and community, gender violence and discrimination. There are accusations from even movement leaders that the movement is leaning towards majoritarianism, which may be countered by asking for increased participation of other voices, but at the same time is a valid critique, as it helps us to sharpen our understandings, positions and responses.

Dr. Kumud Sharma as the chair of the panel noted that excellent presentations had been made which would set the tone for the deliberations of the coming two days. The presentations had brought out the existing solidarity on the issue, as well as the manner in which the debates have been re-negotiated, and the public space that has been claimed by the movement for the debate. The session was opened for discussion on the presentations made by Dr. Indu Agnihotri, Dr. Urvashi Bhutalia and Dr. Kumkum Sangari.

The discussion, in which a large number of delegates participated, was animated and very meaningful. Some participants supported Dr. Bhutalia's statement regarding the manner in which the movement never dealt with community identities, and only looked at women as women. Some participants lamented the present trend of minority women's issues being perceived as very delicate issues. It was felt that we do need to review all personal laws and we do need to take position. Some participants expressed worry over the manner in which new forums for Muslim women are being created on the basis of the Muslim identity. They felt that there was a need to claim our Indianness, and create an Indian platform.

This was responded to by Dr. Agnihotri, who agreed that there was no hesitation on the part of the movement in speaking for Muslim women or women of any other identities. However, it is true that the committed articulate section cannot speak for everyone and there is a value in including different voices. This has been taken note of by the women's movement. And by its very practice of inclusion of different voices, the tag of upper class/caste/majority interests has been trashed.

Several participants felt the need for some kind of an action plan which could be a common minimum charter and would give a direction in terms of issues that need to be addressed as well as manner in which they should be addressed.

The entire issue of women's work was discussed, and while a need was articulated to distinguish between remunerative work and non-remunerative work, like child-care etc., this was countered by questioning the basis on which economic productivity is decided. As certain kind of work may not be paid but may be very critical and highly productive, the ramifications of the distinction must be critically looked into. Dr. Agnihotri responded by pointing out that the women's movement initiated the entire 70s in debate on work. However, one is looking at an entry point to re-open the debate on subsistence labour, so as to challenge the fundamentalist effort at ensuring stereotypes of women's work: in-house work etc. While the distinction between remunerative and non-remunerative work does not have to be blurred, there has to be a way to measure women's contribution.

Another important point which came up in the discussions concerned the political linkage in the present times between the fundamentalist agenda, and the forces of

neo-liberalisation and globalisation. The lines between subsistence labour and domestic labour are extremely blurred which serves everybody's purpose. The fundamentalists want the women out of the public sphere without losing their labour. So by pushing women inside, they still have access to their labour without dealing with demands for rights, as the struggle then is focused on survival. This also ensures capital accumulation. This ensures the right of the rich to contribute the way they are, as the system is irrelevant to them, and ensures growing lack of access for the poor to get out of their situation.

The discussion also took up such questions as family planning, etc., which were presented as secular issues. But these may not be secular issues. They have been extremely contentious and continue to be the same. Even today, women's bodies and their sexuality are flash point issues, which have no global consensus. The discussion also dwelt on the issue of language and the hijacking of the issues of women's movement by the Hindu right, and the kind of paralysing silence that one is pushed into. For instance the UCC debate, the Beauty contests etc., There has to be careful consideration of language, so that the movement does not sound rightist, and there has to be sustained effort at constructing language which is ours, and can ensure that the issues are understood from our perspective.

The participants also brought up the political and strategic limitation of using strategies like engaging religious leaders in resolving women's issues and its repercussions. The need for discussion and questioning the entire acceptance of nationalism and national identity as a patriotic premise also surfaced. It was agreed that there was a need to question the premise of nationalism and the ensuing acceptance of state violence. These need to be examined deeply and challenged in terms of their impact on women.

Afternoon Sessions:

In the afternoon of the first day of the Conference, three concurrent sessions were held:

1. Health and Population concerns {Facilitator: Ms. Jasodhara Das Gupta }
2. Media {Facilitator: Ms. Shahira Naim }
3. Private and Public Divide {Facilitator: Ms. Tulika Shrivastava}

The reporting of the deliberations of these sessions was scheduled on the second day of the Conference.

Day 2

Plenary: Globalisation, Politics & Women

The second plenary session was addressed by Dr. Uma Kalpagam & Dr. Nisha Srivastava.

Dr. U. Kalpagam gave an account of the present state of development and pointed out that even as globalisation provides benefits and opportunities to many in many areas. It could also foreclose certain other benefits and opportunities in other areas which may indeed be crucial for the survival of people. According to her the optimism about globalisation is unfounded, for in a world structured by varieties of inequalities the benefits of globalisation are also unequally distributed. Dr. Kalpagam presented some of the problems and issues that have emerged with globalisation in the domains of economy, culture, society and politics and how they impact on women's lives in India.

Examining some trends and patterns in workforce in the nineties, Dr. Kalpagam said that in the rural areas there has been a decrease in the proportion of both self-employed women and women as regular-wage workers while the proportion of women casual workers has increased. The NSS 50th round survey (1993-94) noted an increase in the proportion of women workers in the primary sector thus reversing an earlier trend. This indicates that the option for diversification to non-agricultural employment is increasingly limited for women. Between 1987-88 and 1993-94 agriculture absorbed most of the new female workers in rural India besides absorbing those displaced from other sectors. Owing to lack of dynamism in rural India, women also suffered in terms of male - female inter sectoral job adjustments, which forced them to go back to agriculture to give way to their male counterparts. Rural women's weak educational background and lack of skill affects them adversely when modern sector activities in the rural non-farm sector become more skill - selective. Globalisation is only likely to increase skill selectivity in the future as economic sectors become more receptive to information technologies and biotechnologies. Same trend was found in the urban areas.

Dr. Kalpagam further pointed out that a sector -wise analysis of the impact of liberalisation and globalisation suggests that for the poorer classes in different traditional occupations such as farming, fishing etc., their livelihood security have been undermined largely on account of lack of rights and statutory protection. Where a majority of the workforce is in the informal sector, it leads to whittling down of workers rights and legal protection. Globalisation is governed by norms of flexibility as regards labour use and as flexible labour contracts become more pervasive, the distinction between formal and informal sector becomes fuzzier she said. Under a less regulated labour regime with flexible labour contracts systemic biases in employment on account of caste, gender education. Skill etc. is likely to be reinforced.

Under flexible labour contracts, the prospects of women's employment in the organised sector are not very bright as management generally views formal sector women workers as the least flexible, while informal sector women workers are considered the most flexible. While emerging IT sector offers opportunities for women especially in remote processing jobs, their accessibility is restricted to the educated women alone. Causing fears that the IT sector may cause increasing polarisation within society and within the work force. Globalisation by unleashing the forces of competition marginalises those unable to compete thus making the market the supreme arbiter of success and failure. Concomitantly social sector expenditures are likely to decrease in the future. If the current indications are taken seriously, we can expect a greater privatisation of both higher education and health-care facilities. Given the prevailing social preferences, this is likely to affect women adversely.

Given this scenario on the economic front, how can we refashion a politics of the women's movement to mitigate the economic effects of globalisation on poor women, Dr. Kalpagam asked. Livelihood security, prioritising social sector development, a comprehensive social security scheme, protection and expansion of labour rights to informal sector worker appear to be areas that need both political focus and policy advocacy. These are areas their different sections of the women's movement have been working for long and these have no doubt to be strengthened. But Dr. Kalpagam also emphasised that the women's movement has to reconsider ways to privilege the "local" and bring the "local" to the forefront of our political consciousness in a politics of anti-globalisation. In the economic domain for instance, livelihood security would entail conferring on local communities the right to determine use of natural resources. Conserving bio-diversity and preservation of locally sustainable economic systems. A feminist politics that privileges the local in conjunction with identifying the structural constraints of the economy and which builds in an understanding of how patriarchal structures operate at all levels would prove better as an anti-globalisation political strategy than one informed by the well known feminist slogan "Think globally. Act locally". Dr Kalpagam urged that we reframe our paradigm in this era of globalisation such that it allows us to "think locally" as well.

Elaborating the social effects of globalisation Dr. Kalpagam said that there is a greater polarisation as indicated by life style patterns. While consumerism has affected women at one end of the social spectrum, the other end is deprived of its basic necessities. Mobility and accessibility have undoubtedly opened up a vast world of opportunities for some women. But for the majority, consumption and lifestyle inequalities in a world without much opportunities and accessibility means that the traditional ideological constraints bind them more severely. In that constrained world, women and girls have always been considered a liability and a burden. For such people, a girl child appears even more burdensome now in their reckoning of opportunity costs. The rise in female foeticide in recent years resulting in adverse

sex ratios in many communities and regions needs to be understood in terms of the increase in the perceived burdens of a girl child in the changed economic context, Dr. Kalpagam maintained.

Giving the example of the advertisement of virgin Atlantic Dr. Kalpagam brought home the point that globalisation also seeks to generate a new set of norms and values for women. These issues now take us to the realm of culture politics under globalisation. The political discourse of culture under globalisation has veered around two extreme positions - one of western culture bashing and the other a discourse of "Indian culture" that exhibits anxiety over its imminent capitulation to the dominant western culture. Both these are discourses inimical to the progressive women's movement, Kalpagam said.

Dr. Kalpagam further gave a detailed critique of the Western-culture bashing that was once made popular by German Kultur discourses and finds recent echoes on the defence of "Asian values" by many authoritarian regimes in the countries of South East Asia as well. According to Kalpagam the problem with this kind of positioning is to attribute to the West a cultural homogeneity that it certainly lacks in the increasingly multicultural world of immigrants, diasporic population and hybridities. Moreover it does not recognise the plurality of opinions and life styles even in this imagined homogenous group for if there are groups that support abortions and gay and lesbian marriages there are equally vociferous religiously - inspired groups that oppose these social and legal changes. Dr. Kalpagam explained that she takes a position of defence against the Western culture bashers for the present purpose of working towards a contextually relevant feminist politics in order to underline the importance of incorporating into the understanding - how the forces of modernity impinge at the grassroots in terms of transformation of desires, need and resources.

Another inimical discourse to which Dr. Kalpagam drew attention, was "Hamara Sanskriti group" comprising predominantly of male interlocutors of Indian feminism with rather suspect motives, often drawing support from the first set of culture police. It is a common refrain among this group of male interlocutors to question the "Indianess" of the Indian women's movement, only to be dismissive of the concern for egalitarianism. This group of feminist basher's view Indian culture as fixed and unchanging in which an upper-caste middle-class idea of culture often the culture that the interlocutor is familiar with, serves to substitute as the national culture to which all are imagined to conform. Hence the Indian women's movement is seen as something western or western inspired feminism ill-suited to our culture, nor is the women's movement's concern for egalitarianism conceded any merit. Ask them what the feminist movement stands for and they will tell you that it stands for sexual freedom, family - destroying tendencies such as sharing of house work between the spouses, women's economic independence, women's choice to have or not to have

sex and children, support for lesbianism and so on. They would hardly mention issues such as imbalances in sex ratio, high female illiteracy, and feminisation of poverty, gender discrimination in labour markets and other kinds of systemic gender inequalities, which the Indian women's movement has highlighted. Kalpagam said, a feminist politics that can challenge the onslaught of this group of interlocutors need to highlight the inequalities and oppressive social and gender relations within a framework that captures both diversities and dynamics of cultural processes and retains the authenticity of grass root women's experiences. A grass root feminist politics that privileges a discourse of the "local" has in this contest a greater potential to challenge traditionalist male chauvinism.

Elaborating further, Kalpagam rejected as too simplistic the argument that the development of globalisation has accompanied religious fundamentalism globally due to the attempt of globalisation to forge cultural homogeneity. She explained this phenomenon by referring to the distinction between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Different ethnic groups in democratic societies feel that ensuring procedural democracy is not sufficient to negate the pressures of cultural assimilation that are often demanded by majoritarian groups and more and more people are less and less willing to succumb to the powers of assimilation. Such an assimilation demand is seen to undermine substantive democracy as cultural identities are erased in the making of a national citizen in multicultural democratic societies. So contrary to the scholars like Charles Taylor who see procedural democracy and substantive democracy as two alternate variants, Kalpagam saw both as necessary requirements for full democratisation. This is not the same, as saying that political democratisation at the state level should be matched by democratisation of society as well. People in democratic societies are members of institutions, groups and communities, and what we mean by democratisation of society is really the democratisation of these groups and communities. Further she said that the fundamentalist groups resist these tendencies for democratisation and although such resistance is not conducted against globalisation and markets, it is often done so in either an anti-western or anti-modernist discourse.

It is under these various forces, Kalpagam said, that the social construction of gender takes place. The social constructions of woman are equally varied – from the consumer women in product advertisements; the westernised looking Indian woman in Indian office settings who equals in efficiency with the office workers of western nations; the multi faceted Indian woman who folds in as homemaker, a dot.com CEO and script writer; the woman who is forced to wear burqa by Kashmiri militants; the empowered woman of our Panchayat Raj; the millions of other woman waiting in turn to be empowered by our paternalistic state; the wounded Bharat Mata and so on. Such social constructions of women, which are also role delineations are meant to transform the conduct of women in desired directions to suit the particular forces at operation.

Dr. Nisha Srivastava, in her address examined Globalisation as a situation, its genesis as well as the kind of impact it would have on women in particular and on the social community in general. Dr. Srivastava maintained that globalisation was not a new phenomenon and that what was new was the acceleration in the speed and scope of movements of real and financial capital primarily because of

- Removal of state controls on trade and investments
- New information and communication technologies
- The emergence at the international level of new institutions for mediation and negotiation

Dr. Shrivastava raised the question why should globalisation be feared despite great expansion of world output and trade and closer interaction. Her answer was that the fear was rooted in

- i) implications for workers and job,
- ii) implication for environment,
- iii) growing inequalities and
- iv) dominance of developed countries in the structures of world governance.

Women's work in the home is little recognised and even less valued. Nevertheless, caring for the sick, the elderly, children and all other members of the family, nurturing human relations with love and selflessness form the invisible backdrop for all economic activities. All societies unfairly allocate most of the responsibility and burden for care in the family and the community to women, Dr. Shrivastava said. Globalisation had fuelled higher consumption patterns for the rich. This has put pressure on the environment of poor countries Dr. Shrivastava informed that according to the Human Development Report (1999), over the past three decades, the income gap between the world's richest fifth and its poorest fifth has more than doubled. Similarly, the report shows that inequalities in incomes, wealth and access have been rising even within counties. Globalisation today, she said, is led by the developed capitalist countries exclusively and aggressively to promote and push their agenda. To this end the institutions that have emerged are dominated by the G-7 countries and are unrepresentative and undemocratic.

Giving an account of the impact of globalisation on India economy Dr. Shrivastava referred to the data of National sample survey. Over the 90's the number of this employed as a proportion of the population has declined. This is so for both rural and urban, male and female. People being out of work may be desirable in some circumstances, but not in others. If a child is taken out of the workforce and put into school, it is desirable, but not if an adult loses his/her job. Largely, the decline in worker population ratios up to the 24-year age group has been accompanied by

an increase in enrolments at the primary middle and college levels. So to the extent that men and women have given up work to gain education. It is a desirable development, Dr. Shrivastava maintained. However, schooling does not explain why employment ratios have fallen for both men and women above 24 years of age. This is explained by the decline in economic activity. Both industrial and agricultural output has stagnated, and consequently employment opportunities have declined and the worker population ratios have come down. Dr. Shrivastava further informed that over the period, women workers moved out from agriculture to eke out an existence in the informal sector where wages are a pittance, productivity is low, and there is no job security. Although the percentage of population below the poverty line has gone down in the decade, the decline is only by 2-3 percent in the period between 1989-94 and 1999-2000, which is insignificant. While 33.5 percent males live below the poverty line, the percentage of women below the poverty line is a little higher, it is 35.5 percent. Although Dr. Shrivastava found it difficult to give clear verdict on reforms, she found it clear that globalisation as it is being pushed by the corporate interests of the developed world has worsened the situation for the poor and the powerless.

Although Dr. Shrivastava accepted the desirability of women's protest against globalisation she cautioned against making it the punching bag for all our failures. She presented the crises of governance as more crucial than that of globalisation. She maintained that women have not only to oppose globalisation, but also their own governments and that they must evolve new paradigms for governance, not only within nations, but also between nations.

Dr. Hemlata Swaroop, the co-Chairperson of the session summarised the presentations of Dr Kalpagam & Dr. Shrivastava. She recalled that during the Earth summit, the Human Development Report bore a cover with a picture of an inverted funnel to show the gap between developing and developed nations, which had increased, manifold since 1960. She also pointed out that the growth rate during the period when the process of globalisation intensified had become 2%. The question of who gains is becoming more and more critical. The session was then opened to discussion.

Some participants pointed out that the forces of globalisation had no ideology of their own, and take on the popular language. Advertisements for foreign goods using stereotype images of "Indian Women" exemplify this. Some other participants feel that in all discussions on Globalisation we critique the theme at the macro structure, but then think of local initiatives. While it may not advocate Globalisation as such, there is an attempt to say that regardless of the major policies, we will build our own things, locally, which is a surrender of sorts. Another point, which came up in the discussions was that if we maintain that globalisation is here to stay and we will try to answer it with local governance, this approach cannot go very far. It was felt that

there was a need of a sharper questioning so as to structure a more up-front challenge to the phenomenon of globalisation. Some participants said that media itself was impacted by globalisation. Journalists are now on contracts, losing their jobs which in its own turn will affect independence of the press, as already there is a moving trend to look at newspapers as products rather than people's conscience. The manner, in which gender pages are created and scrapped, stories thrown out for colour photographs, is a clear indication that the Editors are representing the market more and more and the people's consciousness, less and less. It was also pointed out that one can say that globalisation can be negative and positive. However, the question would be, for whom it is positive and for whom it is negative.

Dr. S. Charles. The other Co-chairperson of the session thanked the participants and the resource persons for their time and participation.

Afternoon session:

In the afternoon of the second day of the Conference, three concurrent sessions were held:

1. Communalism [Facilitator: Dr.Urvashi Bhutalia]
2. Role of State [Facilitator: Dr. Pooja Juyal & Dr. Manjum Agrawal]
3. Education [Facilitator: Dr. Nishi Mehrotra]

The reporting of all the concurrent sessions was made in the last session of Conference.

Reporting Session:

I Communication:

Main issues:

- 1 Communication and Women's movement
- 2 Communication as a force with economic backing, and not merely to do with religion.
- 3 Communication vis a vis Secularism: the understanding of the two concepts
- 4 Both majority and minority communalism.

The group recognised that there has been a qualitative change for the worse in the situation since the rise of the Hindu right and the destruction of the Babri Masjid which makes the present discussion imperative as well as calls for more clear cut action. The discussion in the group focused on the following:

- The situation of communal violence and riots, in which minorities are targeted, are often engineered (as in Bhagalpur) to destroy their economic base. Such situations also result in creating fear and insecurity among minorities, especially women, who take the lead in reform in minority communities. Often the community retreats further which is both a cultural and an economic loss to the mainstream.
- It is essential to deal with the myths, stereotypes and feelings that we imbibe and internalise about the “other” – whether it is a religious other or a caste other at different levels
- The role of electoral politics, particularly now that the women are being seen as an important vote bank is crucial. Similarly, globalisation and the reserve army of women’s labour it draws on, tie in often with the communal agenda
- The strategies women should adopt to deal with communalism must be worked out. Can religion be an entry point for women? The question threw up a large debate in the group wherein a broad consensus seemed to indicate that while one needs to give special attention to religious identity in the discussions of minority/majority communalism, the overall approach should focus on women as women, as right bearers, and work from there.
- The movement has to study/understand communalism more deeply and develop a new language to counter it.
- The need to understand communalism not only as something that relates to riots but also to people’s day to day life and discourses.
- The recognition of not only women’s double burden of work (in-house & out-sourcing work) but also the burden of carrying the honour and identity of the community.

II. Private and public Divide:

The group on private and public divide spent time in understanding the usage of the same in terms of fundamentalism and its impact on women. The discussion took up the following main points:

- The location of women in the private, and men in the public sphere
- The values attached for women to continue in the private sphere and the access to public space allocated to certain kinds of participation by women, within given frameworks.
- The distinction in recognition of rights in each sphere and the complexities in accessing rights in the private sphere, even for “good” women.

- The advantage that flows from this artificial divide to fundamentalist forces.

The group also looked at the ensuing validation of the private and public divide, by the language of the globalisation forces, in tandem with the fundamentalist agenda, which by use of popular images seeks to locate women within home and eulogises this role as the ideal, and the loss of the public arena as minimal. The group brought out many examples of violation of civil and political rights in the private sphere. These examples centred around mainly:

- Honour killings
- Culture/Identify-preservation based community terrorism: Acid attacks, public murders, community punishments etc.

The group also discussed the nature of access and the legitimacy provided to the participation of women. It analysed the manner in which the access to the public sphere has been at the premium of the nature of participation. The participation of Hindu women in the public sphere in a violent manner during the felling of the Babri-Masjid also brought out in open the critical need to understand the fundamentalist values. This was important, as these are used day in and day out, in every day life, which make space for violent responses in the events of this nature. There is a consensus that women's rights are located in the private sphere without challenging that the "family" per se is not an area which is limited to the private sphere and there are many interventions of the family which are based on the public sphere and /or affect the public sphere. It is only when the issue of intervening to protect women's rights is raised that the issue of "private" area become all-important. For instance, despite knowing that dowry is a critical issue, and in effect has the potential of determining whether a women lives or dies, parents continue to marry off daughters.

It was noted that culture and religion could not be separated and one is used to facilitate or legitimise the other. This also showed the link between private and public as, although there is a difference in recognition of rights and their security, the private sphere is actively used to control access and participation in the public sphere. Also, the public sphere is determined in a manner as to practice gender distinction and bias. This can also be seen in the "sati" committed by Charanshah two year ago in Mahoba. She belonged to a caste in which there is no known tradition of sati, but there are three temples of Sati in that area and enough uncounted stories to forward it as a "good" value. This complex linkage between culture and religious values combines to defeat women's struggles and needs to be addressed in a cohesive manner. These linkages are also seen in the half-hearted proactive measures taken by the state to apparently ensure the political participation of women. In the absence of addressing the cultural reasons that have kept women out of decision-making, the state has created a situation in which women are vulnerable

to coercion, violence, and exploitation. We may condemn the Sarpanch Pati (Husband of the Head of the Panchayat) practices and the state, but a real situation, to be lived through by the woman concerned as well as the community. Further, it defeats the very purpose of the Amendment to the Constitution. So while such proactive measures are needed, the state cannot do one thing (legislation) and not the other (action to follow-up) and continue to use the language of private/public divide.

Such political usage of arena needs to be exposed and challenged, as the rights that need to be secured are not different in nature just because of their location. The actual facts for the oblique marginalisation/invisibilisation of violations in the private need to be surfaced as a political reality which is informed by gender-bias and seeks to maintain a status quo in relation to women, along with their different realities.

III. Education:

The group on Education focussed mainly on recommendations. It discussed the educational policy of the present government which seeks to saffronise education while pretending to be a progressive and women friendly policy, and speaks of women's equality in education and scientific temper.

The recommendations were:

- Education should maintain quality, equality and secular principles.
- Within the value education frame whole education should be broad minded, women positive, livelihood/work related and non-discriminatory.
- The National Curriculum framework of NCERT should be re-examined with a wider consultative framework, as it does not give space for democratic development of curriculum.
- Education must take into account messages about communalism, saffronization, segregation and exclusive to be egalitarian and inclusive for all.
- Separate women colleges (This was questioned by many participants and not accepted unconditionally)
- Emphasis on continuing education for rural women and girls for need based learning and continuing literacy campaigns aligning with local issues.
- Proactive support to CBOs and other community groups to set accountability of education providers and improve quality of basic education. Right to information and public drafts.
- Higher and technical education to be gender focused for students and teachers.
- Support innovations in education to facilitate cross fertilisation of ideas

- Privatisation of education to be reviewed in view of the interests of all who seek it so as to prevent marginalisation of poor, girls & disadvantaged.
- All future curricula at all levels should be in consonance with the constitutional principles of equality, democracy, secularism and promotion of women's equality.

IV. Role of State

This group also focused mainly on recommendations:

- The natural sovereignty of the state be preserved and promoted, in the context of globalisation and the State should promote the interests of its own people.
- The state should maintain its secular nature and credentials.
- The state should take all steps to fight fundamentalism
- The state should maintain its responsibilities as a welfare state, focusing attention on issues of women's health and education
- The state should encourage and ensure people's participation at all levels, in policy formation and dissemination
- The state should abstain from acts of state terrorism and violation of civil liberties
- The state should protect people's civil liberties from infringement by other agencies.
- The state could uphold and encourage the process of decentralisation
- Social and democratise movements in the country should be intensified.
- The state should intensify its role in the cause of the maintenance of law and order, and the state should refrain from patriarchal and gender biased attitudes.
- The state should work on electoral reforms and prevent criminalisation of politics and implement them
- The electoral reforms calling for declaration of income of elected representative should be made.

V. Media:

The group on Media outlined the strategic role of media the need to engage with it in a critical and informed manner, and re-educate ourselves of its priorities, as even media is not a neutral actor. The following points were emphasised by this group:

- The agenda-setting role of the media is important. However, the agenda being set by the media for public debate has to be critically analysed.
- A need to objectively analyse the media messages in the context of globalisation, fundamentalism, stereotyping of roles of the marginalised, (gender, minority, disabled, dalit, etc.)
- Media should be seen as a part of the whole discourse of restructuring, and not outside it. Media should be seen as an "ideal" type. The owners and the employees are very much operating in the same milieu and should be seen in that context. Media should also be sensitised as partners and allies.
- The danger of communal symbols and consumer lifestyles projected by the media needs to be analysed and seen in the present socio-economic context.

VI. Health and Population Concerns :

This group presented the following major points :

- The manner in which women's bodies are perceived, as zone of control is crucial. The reproductive ability is the critical power over which control is sought and ensured. In fact, women's health issues are often confined to reproductive abilities only.
- The manner in which contraception is promoted is also something that needs close examination. Population control has been linked to women, the next easy step being coercion.
- The shame attached to possessing a woman's body is also something, which is internalised and women themselves deny pride or pleasure in themselves unless they are serving a specific purpose.
- In the age of globalisation the insistence on chemical-quick-fix contraceptives is increasing, while even knowledge about the natural contraception is disappearing. It is important to recognise that women's health is not even seen as a priority. And even when some attention is paid to her health, it is only reproductive health, which is noticed, and not her general health. It is necessary to have an agenda for women's health and reproduction.
- Dual burden leads to stress, which further causes problems like tuberculosis among women. An appeal was made to place the health issue on the agenda of Women's movement in a big way.

After the reporting by all the six groups and discussions thereon, the Conference concluded with passing the following resolution for peace:

“ This Conference convened by IAWS, CWDS and Institute of Women's Studies, Lucknow University, condemns all acts of terrorism and violence and associating terrorism with religion. We also unanimously condemn the rhetoric of war and retribution being justified in the name of 'infinite justice' and 'enduring freedom'. We are concerned that this rhetoric has already had far reaching repercussions, which are evident not only in attacks on minorities in the US but also in our own country, as is evident from the recent violence in Lucknow. We feel that a true commitment to justice should first begin at home before offering help in the global fight against terrorism. We believe that war is not a solution to any problem. Rather, it is one of the fountainheads of problems and human misery. Moreover, women have a higher stake in peace and therefore we appeal to all concerned to mobilize opinion against war and its destructive methodology of dealing with conflicts”.

**DALIT FEMINISM:
A CRITIQUE OF DIFFERENCE
WESTERN REGION WORKSHOP REPORT**

Organised by

**The Women's Studies Unit, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Mumbai,**

In Collaboration With

The Indian Association for Women's Studies

1st & 2nd August 2001

Dr. Lakshmi Lingam*
Ms. Pratima Bhandarkar¹ #

The workshop titled "Dalit Feminism: A Critique of Difference", is a collaborative workshop organised by the Indian Association for Women's Studies and the Women's Studies Unit, of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai on 1st & 2nd August 2001.

The workshop set itself the objectives to understand the emergence of Dalit women's movement and discern the debate that has ensued in the recent past on the issues like 'representation', upper class/caste women's leadership of the women's movement and dalit women's leadership as an alternative and the issue of identity politics.

In her introductory remarks, Prof. Pushpa Bhave, Vice President of the Association remarked, that historically, in Maharashtra, all women were labelled as dalits, thus collapsing all caste and class differences. However, such an approach is not fruitful either in theorising or in activism. For example, Janabai was doubly oppressed, as a woman and as a Dalit. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the only person who analysed caste and gender relations and highlighted the caste system as being at the core of the Hindu mindset. Prof. Bhave quoted Ambedkar's famous words: "Women are the gateway to the caste system". Both Ambedkar and Phule's philosophy dealt with the management of women's sexuality by the high caste patriarchy. With the "tamasha" culture, the Brahmin women were regarded as "chaste" and the women from lower castes were considered to be "available". The years between 1975 and 1985 saw the rise of the Dalit Panther and other movements in Maharashtra, which

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were however, opposed by the "higher caste" and the feudal set up in rural Maharashtra. The Dalit Panther highlighted the caste issues to the neglect of patriarchy that existed within the system. While some critiques were of the view that no social problem can be solved unless the caste problem is addressed, the women's movement argued that gender issues are inextricably woven in caste and class issues. Hence, they cannot be neglected. Women in the Dalit Panther were oppressed in the patriarchal set up, but according to Prof. Bhave, when the dalit men raised this issue, the mainstream women's movements objected saying that the dalit men were appropriating dalit women's grief to their advantage.

Bringing us to the contemporary scene, Prof. Bhave observed that academicians and activists are divided on the 'difference' issue, hence it is important to seek clarifications and move forward. According to her health, migration, employment and environmental problems arising as a result of globalisation have threatened the sanctity of human life. Organisations dealing with the implications of globalisation cannot turn a blind eye to the caste system (which itself belittles human existence), as the dalit women are further oppressed in the globalisation process.

The workshop had four sessions. The session outlines are given here in brief:

Session 1 : Conceptualising Caste, Patriarchy & Gender

Session 2 : Dalit Movement and Women

Session 3 : Dalit Women's Movement & Women's Movement – Interface

Session 4 : Responses & Conclusion.

The **first session** on Conceptualising Caste, Patriarchy and Gender was chaired by Prof. Gopal Guru. There were two presentations in this session:

"Theorising Dalit Women's Oppressions—Some Issues"—Prof. Padma Velaskar, TISS:

Prof. Velaskar attempted to address some basic theoretical issues, which are crucial to furthering our understanding of women's oppression. The single most important theoretical problem is to analyse the intersection of patriarchy with caste and class to illuminate the oppression of dalit women. The methodological approach to the problem of dalit women's oppression involves a systematic historical, sociological and feminist examination of the complex interplay between caste, class and patriarchy, focussing on institutions, cultural systems and ideologies associated with these structures. What needs recognition is that the interaction of patriarchy with caste and class does not make for 'greater' or 'lesser' oppression, but for a qualitatively different type of oppression. Caste, class or gender alone, cannot

adequately explain dalit women's experiences.

The speaker examined the relationship between the structure of caste and the structure of patriarchy with a view to understanding the specificity of social subordination of dalit women. The speaker explored the differences and commonalties between upper caste and lower caste women, and between lower caste men and women. The caste untouchability system oppresses, disables and exploits directly – bringing forth the commonality between men and women. To build an Indian theory of patriarchy there is a need to accommodate the difference between women and to take cognisance of commonalties between men and women that bear upon gender power relations within low caste groups and see the impact of these on women's subjectivities.

The speaker pointed out the implications of structural changes for dalit women. In the context of economic and social change one needs to examine dalit women's contemporary situation and experiences from the perspective of caste, economic class, politics and patriarchal angles, focussing on the transformation in work, wages and family life. A feminism that aims to improve the lives of all women and at the same time recognises their differential relation to one another cannot ignore the material reality of capitalism's class system in women's lives. Dalit feminism must respond to the emerging salience of class in addition to the qualitative difference brought about by caste.

“Dr. Ambedkar's Views on Women's Emancipation” – Prof. Jogdand, Mumbai University

The speaker presented his paper on the above topic by introducing Ambedkar as the first leader of the dalits who not only wrote on the various issues but also waged series of protests against the evil practices that existed in our society. Ambedkar was not only the architect of the Constitution, but most of all an 'emancipator' and 'liberator' of the weaker sections (i.e. SC, ST and women) of our country. From the available evidence in the form of his writings – “The women and the counter revolution”, “The rise and fall of Hindu women”, Hindu Code Bill and his speeches delivered on gender justice – it is clear that Ambedkar was deeply concerned about the problems of women.

Before discussing Ambedkar's views on women's emancipation, the speaker gave a brief on how women were regarded in early Indian society and the efforts done by the social reformers to improve their lot. Ambedkar argued that the caste system itself is responsible for women's subordination and exploitation.

To put the men and women on equal footing it was Ambedkar who included the Articles 14,15 and 16, which deal with right to equality in the Indian Constitution. He produced a more radical Hindu Code Bill doing away with all customary practices

in the areas of marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession. He wanted to liberate women from the clutches of patriarchy and caste. In Ambedkar's analysis of caste, the analysis of women's subordination is subsumed. Thus, he identified caste system as the only source for women's exploitation. In comparison to other social reformers and his contemporaries, Ambedkar's approach was a fundamental one. He did not indulge in the debate on which reform to take up first – political or social; for him bringing about social change in all spheres of life was important.

In conclusion, the speaker expressed that Ambedkar's views are still relevant to address the complexities of caste and gender in the current scenario, and if Ambedkar's emancipatory agenda is supplemented to the feminist discourse then it will definitely lead to the emancipation of "all women" in our society.

As a conclusion to the first session Prof. Gopal Guru had elaborated on the need for theory, theory building and pre-requisites for theorizing, in response to a general observation on why the attempts to build theory is not a priority for Indian scholars in general and feminist scholars in particular.

A theory cannot be done when an experience is being particularised. It requires universally valid conceptual framework. However, what is condemned to be particular can also be argued as a theory.

- Theoretical explanations cannot be right, just because the one propagating the theory is born in that category. Any person can do theory about any category. Ambedkar was denied on the grounds that a dalit person cannot do a general theory.
- Can literature become a theory? Literature offers critical reflection and is a facilitator of theory.
- A theory is not meant for a competitive market. Every theory needs to coexist as they share the common fields of political economy and environmentology.
- The chair compared dalit feminism with black feminism because of similar problems addressed in both movements.
- There is a need for a theory as we are not just women in a compartment in the train of history; we would like to know where the train is heading.

The **second session**, chaired by Prof. Dahiwalé, from Pune University had Ms. Usha Wagh – Dalit Mahila Forum, Pune, speak on 'Dalit Politics and Women' followed by 'Patriarchy and Caste within Dalit society' by Dr. Seema Sakhare, Nagpur, both in Hindi.

'Dalit Politics and Women' – by Ms. Usha Wagh, Dalit Mahila Forum, Pune

The speaker highlighted certain myths on the women's movement's understanding of Dalit politics:

- Dalit politics implies the politics done by the dalits.
- Dalits cannot do politics without reservation.
- All women are dalits.
- Women think that being dalits they have the right to speak/confront politics.

The speaker then went on to present her points of discussion.

While both dalit feminists and the women's movement emphasise that they are suppressed, deprived and backward, it is a utopian act of uniting the two. The speaker is of the view that dalit women have so far not been given opportunities to represent mainstream women. Her credibility is lowered because she speaks in a local language and not in a standard language; thereby the contribution of dalit women is devalued. In a dalit women's forum, if a political figure arrives, then the movement is politicised and condemned for not having any relevant issues. When a dalit person progresses or achieves something, he/she is not given due credit for the achievements and it is assumed that the person has got it for free and not striven for it. In dalit politics, as in general politics, a woman is used as an instrument and is not respected as an individual in her own right. Sexual relations are always at the core of such politics. The displacement of women is brought about by society either on purpose (forced eviction, mass murder, gang-rape) or through natural disasters, resulting in an emergence of child labourers, rag pickers and commercial sex-workers.

The speaker criticised the mainstream women's movement's attitude of 'we will give and they will receive', in the case of the Dalit cause.

'Patriarchy and Caste within Dalit Society' – by Dr. Seema Sakhare, Nagpur

The speaker began the presentation by taking us back to 1972 with her experiences in advocating for the rights of Mathura, who was raped by two police constables Ganpat and Tukaram in the confines of the police station. She mentioned that she has fought against violence against women. She had not 'essentialised' caste, at that point.

The speaker emphasised that caste is a prominent factor causing the oppression and violence among dalit women. Lower caste women are more often targets of abuse. The reason given for violence against women is that they do not obey the order of the upper caste people or they raise their voices for their rights.

The speaker highlighted that Dalits are also not a homogenous category. The speaker pointed out that the violence against dalits by the dalits go unnoticed. Intracaste marriages among the dalits is opposed by dalits. Of the atrocities done on the dalits by other dalits, the worst victims are dalit women. Patriarchy in the dalit household was highlighted. While, violence against women cuts across all class and caste groups, there is regular wife beating, physical and mental violence against dalit women by their alcoholic husbands. Dalit men control women's productivity both within the household and outside. Males also have control over property and other economic resources in the dalit family. The speaker strongly felt that while the women's movement should pay cognisance to caste-based discrimination and violence, the focus on patriarchy, which exists across different caste and class groups, should be a priority.

The **third session**, chaired by Prof. Pushpa Bhave, had three speakers. 'Dalit Feminism: Need for Convergence' – by Prof. Chhaya Datar, TISS 'Interrelationship of various movements' – by Lata P.M., National Alliance for People's Movement (NAPM) and 'Violence, Dalit Feminism and Healing of Fragmentation' – by Prof. Gabriele Dietrich, Madhurai.

'Dalit Feminism: Need for Convergence' – by Prof. Chhaya Datar, TISS.

The speaker began the presentation with a brief outline of the evolution of Dalit women's movement that came as a response to the brahminical overtones of the present women's movement. It stressed the caste differences between women and sought closer caste identity with Dalit men. After scrutinising the chronological sequencing of the articles published in journals over the last few years, it appears that caste difference among women active in the movement were contextualised within the framework of the "theory of difference" by Dalit men and later this framework was adopted by women theoreticians also. However, the theorisation acquired antagonistic stance claiming more radical position by adopting "Identity Politics".

Identity politics, under the thesis of multiculturalism takes into account neither historicity of identities nor believes in the idea of necessary structural changes to achieve long term social justice. It advocates tolerance and competition, ideas conducive for neo-liberal polity and globalised economy. Some of the principles behind the identity politics are well appreciated. The core argument is that women are not a homogeneous group/community/class but are divided into several categories that are related to each other in a hierarchical manner. Hence there cannot be one women's movement but different women's movements.

While the theory of difference believes that there is a plane level with different sections of people on it, the Marxist theory brings to the fore hierarchical oppression. Marxism views production and reproduction as the vital areas of human life. Technology is the key element to development and market. Subsistence perspective as opposed to

survival perspective, puts forward reproduction as an activity of main concern and must be carried out in a globalised manner. In the above context, brahminical feminism believes that dalit women get liberated when they migrate, although they live in slums. As an eco-feminist, the speaker challenges urbanisation as a panacea and advocates the need for women's groups to converge to find common grounds with other movements like displaced people's movement, health movement, environmental movement, etc. There is a need for Dalit women's movement to analyse the situation of Dalit women in the context of present reality in terms of socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects, which is fast changing under the stormy ethos of globalisation.

'Inter-relationship of Various Movements – by Lata P.M. from NAPM

The speaker gave her experiences of working for the *Narmada Bachao Andolon*, which is in essence working for the *jal, jungle and jameen* (water, forest and land) rights of the people. The presentation brought to the fore the effects of globalisation. Privatisation is not only about the upper caste people losing their jobs, but dalits and adivasis too bear the brunt by being displaced because of projects like MIDC and Enron. Dalits are more often displaced and are forced to migrate to the cities where they do not gain access to public services like ration, electricity, water, and education for their children, etc. Development is at the cost of the dalits and adivasis.

Rights of access to resources like food, fuel and fodder are the basis of all movements. This necessitates the need to build an alliance on commonalities. Talking of any cause need not pertain to a specific caste; an alliance brings together the struggles. The National Alliance for People's Movements is an alliance of various movements. Different movements have their own objectives and strengths, thus preserving their identity in an alliance, but they have a common focus, to ensure that water, electricity, fodder and fuel remain with the people. Nuclear energy, uranium is important for the country but not at the cost of displacement. The speaker focused on the threat of globalisation and the need to converge concerns across movements while maintaining the specificity of each struggle/movement.

'Violence, Dalit Feminism and Healing of Fragmentation' – by Prof. Gabriele Dietrich, Madhurai

Prof. Gabriele Dietrich had argued through a detailed set of incidents on state and caste violence connected to electoral politics, in the State of Tamil Nadu. Dalit women experience multiple forms of patriarchal violence. She had also highlighted the significance of the sensitivity of the women's movement to issues of inter and intra-caste violence on women.

The events that led to the writing of this paper were the state violence and caste violence interconnected with party politics in Tamil Nadu. The National Commission for Women raised objections against the scandalous behaviour of the police against women to show who controlled power. The women were quite outspoken about the atrocities. The second round of election-related violence was in September 1999, 50 villages were raided, houses were burnt, a young boy was electrocuted through the passage of current in water, many miscarriages were reported; it was a human rights violation on a large scale. However a dalit leader of the dalit movement in Tamil Nadu ignored the magnitude of the event and he was banned from the area for two months through the joint efforts of the women's organisations.

In an alliance movement, it is important to take a stand and identify caste-based violence. Village nurses in Tamil Nadu, many from the dalit and *vaniya* caste formed a union to protest against the government doctor of the health centre who abused them on basis of their caste. Similarly, other alliances were formed to take up the issues of construction and beedi workers.

One of the issues in the fragmentation of the women's movement in the context of global exploitation is the assault on agriculture and food security with the onslaught of mechanisation. Agricultural is the livelihood of most dalits and any development has to be sustainable in the context of the history and aspirations of the dalits. Women's invisible labour under conditions of violence and internal colonisation cannot be overlooked in the process.

Some of the salient Points that came up for discussion during the two-day workshop were as follows:

1. Theorising difference of the masculinities
2. Relevance of eco feminism
3. Dalit women's political agenda
4. Fragmentation of issues in the context of identity politics and globalisation
5. Can dalit women's question be separated from dalit men's question?

During the **fourth & final session of consolidation and responses**, chaired by Prof. Pushpa Bhave some of the additional areas that were tabled as follows:

- i) Intra-dalit relationship: how do gender, caste, class and patriarchy operate within the dalit community? ii) the caste fraction after the Mandal Commission and the relation of *bahujan strivaaad* with dalit feminism.
- The presentations reflected that dalits cannot be grouped into one homogenous category as there are divisions resulting in caste differences and caste violence within the dalit community.

- The use of 'reformer' to describe Dr. Ambedkar was pointed out as incorrect. Instead, Dr. Ambedkar has to be described as a 'revolutionary' who attempted to bring about a change in the lives of the women in general and of the lower caste women in particular.
- While on the one hand, women are used as proxy in politics, it was felt that these women in politics do not seem to use this forum to pull up other women with similar backgrounds. While it is easy to question this, it must also be remembered that it has taken 50 years of independence before women political leaders like Phoolan Devi or Mayawati stood for elections. Getting more dalit women into the forefront of politics is an equally slow but steady task. One might wonder that issues dear to the dalit cause have not been taken up by the dalit women in politics. This again is a myth as there is not one political party so far that listened to a dalit woman and offered suggestions for the whole party. It needs to be acknowledged that it is difficult for one dalit woman to lift others in the circumstances described above.
- Reservation for dalit women in the political scenario needs to be considered within the 33% quota system allocated for women in politics. The reason being, while only the educated women and those with access to opportunities make it into the election process and ultimately get elected, dalit women tend to get left out because of hierarchical differences operating against them.
- As there are Dalit Buddhists, Dalit Christians and Dalit Hindus, is a further fragmentation of the dalits envisaged in the context of reservation? This question is raised in the context of 'who is most victimised?' Here the identity is 'victimhood', there is a competition of who is more victimised and this is used as an instrument in party politics.
- The Atrocities Against Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Act of 1989, defines atrocities as those which are carried out by a non SC/ST individual on a person from the SC/ST community; i.e. where the offender is a non-dalit. It was felt that there is also a need to expand the scope of this Act to accommodate intra dalit atrocities as well.
- There is a difference between advocating for the likes of Mathura and Rameezabi on the one hand, and working towards their representation, on the other.
- A parallel was drawn between black feminism and dalit feminism as while the former is racism based on colour, the latter is based on caste.
- It was felt labels like 'brahminical' and 'elite feminists' to women leaders of Dalit Women' movement to connote the process of sanskritisation are derogatory and demeaning.

- Cultural practices derogatory to women; for example, devadasi and jogan practice; digging up the bones of a dead pregnant woman and rejoicing; woman cladding neem leaves and parading the streets as religious offering, etc. Do we see these as merely cultural practices of the 'other', or identify the oppression that goes on in the name of culture? It was observed that these cultural practices which have originated or have been perpetuated in patriarchal feudal systems have to also be examined in terms of what kind of power, spaces and controls do they give women over material resources and livelihood.
- It emerged that dalit women would want to branch out *not more out of a need* for identity, but for a conceptual clarity and understanding of the issues encircling them, while at the same time remaining a part of the women's movement as a whole. Dalit women should not be viewed as clients who receive a service. Spaces to develop ideology and critique from the dalit perspective within the women's movement is much needed. Where there is determination, there is no barrier of caste and gender that cannot be crossed during a campaign or movement. It is strongly felt that efforts need to be made to involve dalit women in the women's movement.
- Patriarchy and caste have a material base influencing the access to resources. Impurity and pollution are the commonalities between dalit men and women. Tamil Nadu has witnessed the oppression of dalits by the OBCs who are an inch above the dalits in the social ladder. While patriarchal hierarchy exists within the dalit community as a whole, structural hierarchy within the household cannot be ignored.

In conclusion, this western region seminar has brought out different caste complexities in Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Many representatives here first worked with dalit women and then got involved in the women's movement. It was clarified that there is no question of negating dalit feminism. No feminist movement has rejected Phule and Ambedkar's principles. Acknowledging all the view points, opinions, and experiences shared by the speakers and the participants, the chairperson of this session closed the workshop by emphasising that there was still a lot of work to be done, a lot of struggles to be involved in and a lot of successes to be achieved.

GLOBALISATION, IDENTITY POLITICS AND RISING VIOLENCE

REPORT OF THE IAWS REGIONAL WORKSHOP
AT GANDHIGRAM RURAL UNIVERSITY,
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT CO-ORGANISED BY
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL ANALYSIS, MADURAI
MARCH 24/25 2001

Dr. Gabriele Dietrich ·

The rationale of the workshop was to assess the impact of globalisation on women in the Southern states and to create a dialogue between researchers and activists. There is a need for in depth discussion between people who see the decentralisation which comes with liberalisation as an opportunity for women's empowerment and others who feel that destruction of the resource base and universal market penetration marginalises and dis-empowers women more than ever. The setting of Gandhigram's Political Science Department was congenial, as the Head of the Department Dr. Palanidurai is deeply involved with women in Panchayats, both at the state level and the national level. Other participants were teaching women's studies in very remote places or were organising women in self-help groups, while a strong contingent from Kerala is involved in issues of women and health and in exposing violence against women.

After a brief cordial welcome by **Dr. Palanidurai**, D. Gabriele explained the history of IAWS with emphasis in its long term commitment to secularism and social justice, highlighting some of the major discussions over the years, especially the debates on communalism in Yadavpur, the first assessment of Globalisation in Mysore and the growing awareness of ecological issues in Jaipur and Pune.

Ms. Nalini Nayak, a veteran in the fish-workers movement in Kerala and at global levels and also involved in building SEWA Trivandrum, gave a conceptual introduction into the workshop topic. She questioned the breaking of national barriers by global capitalism and went into the history of nation-state formation and its connection with identity politics (largely along the lines of Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities)

She then outlined the "development" process during the second half of 20th century which led to formation of international finance institutions and the overwhelming

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dominance of trade regimes. While UNCTAD had still emphasized Development, by the end of the century after the Dunkel Draft, GATT and WTO, trade had become the dominant mechanism.

She recalled the struggles of the “old feminist” generation against the hegemonic development, while the younger generation has had to face a situation in which welfare measures were already dismantled, the state had abdicated its responsibility and only some left over “safety nets” were made available, while military expenditure has gone up drastically.

In this situation, the “new opportunities” appear highly questionable. What can women in panchayats hope to achieve? What do self-help groups really accomplish? There is a tendency to incorporate women’s energies into the policies of WB and MNCs. In this context some examples were cited.

For instance, Unilever promoted marketing of its products through self-help groups also. In the murder case of Indira and Rathnamal of Bheemantoppu near Thiruvallur, self-help groups had been used against the local struggle for total prohibition and to protect the position of the local collector. Thus, while decentralisation in itself is a welcome step it can also be problematised as part of the strategy to reduce the responsibility of the State.

Nalini worked out the conceptualisation of production of life and livelihood vs. production for profit and the need to overcome the dichotomy between production and so-called “re-production” as production of life is itself the base for all extended production. She went into the conceptualization of Herman Daly of “entropic throughput”- which implies the need to recognize the first and second law of thermodynamics and to calculate the energy-consumption from start to finish.

Herman Daly envisages development as qualitative improvements, independent of quantitative growth. She illustrated the destructiveness of the present growth process with the onslaught-taking place on agricultural sector.

She also elaborated on the crisis in fisheries, forestry and small-scale industries. Today it is taken for granted that “some people have to pay the price” for economic growth. What is required is a focus on food security and ecological sustainability. This would require a different, people centred political process as well. The challenge before the women’s movement is to create such a process.

The second paper of this session was presented by **Padmini Swaminathan** of MIDS on “Globalization, Employment and Women’s Health”. She pointed out that there is nothing inevitable about globalisation and that 1991 onwards only meant wholesale globalisation while the process itself had been going on much longer. Exclusion of weaker sections and withdrawal from social sector had started earlier. The fiscal deficit and little foreign exchange reserve created a situation, which superimposed

new problems. This aggravated many problems, which had actually already started from second Five-Year Plan onwards.

The corporate sector finds it difficult to face the competition, while the government, now bought over, is wooing multinationals. Due to illiteracy and numerous social problems, it is difficult even to provide the basic infrastructure. Padmini provided insights into export oriented projects in Nasik, Mumbai slums and in Chengleput. In Nasik, a well-organized Adivasi workforce was harvesting grapes. The European counterparts had held workshops to enforce stringent rules on problems of chemicals, size, shape, packing which all had to correspond to international standards. This standardization made the job extremely stressful and led to burnout syndrome by age.40. Eyestrain, aches and pain were common symptoms. But as the objective was to let their children study, the workers did not have a proper alternative as agricultural labour or work on their own farm would have meant a less of income.

The Mumbai situation consisted of home based production, especially by Muslim women who were doing tailoring and embroidery. The work burden was very severe and even terminal illnesses were not attended to.

The Chengleput study related to registered small scale units which offer employment to women, but all highly informal. Even recognition as labourers is difficult and the workers cannot get their P.F. when they leave. The immense time pressure of the job leads to acidity, stomach aches, ulcers. But women can make no health claims. The situation is extremely difficult for the lower middle class.

During the discussion Padmini pointed out that China had handled the same problems in more unified way and therefore had got more advantages while in India, the situation is much more fragmented and therefore bargaining power vis-a-vis multinationals is less.

The second session dealt with micro experiences. Ms. Gokilavani of women's Studies Department, Alagappa University Karaikudi presented a study on producer's markets (Uzhaivar Sandai) in Madurai and Dindigul. This is a specific project of the Tamilnadu government to ameliorate the lot of small producers under impact of export orientation and import liberalisation. It is an attempt to create direct links between producer and consumer and to eliminate middlemen.

About hundred such markets have been established and Madurai was the first experiment. It turned out that women's participation in these markets was very uneven (between 9%-54%). Most of the women were between 30-40 years old. It was found that women were substantially enhancing their contribution to the family income by participating in Uzhaivar Sandai. Indebtedness was identified as a major problem. It was found that the price fixing committees had no women members and women administrative officers were also no involved. It was suggested that self-help

groups could tackle the problem of indebtedness and that women's representation in price fixing committees and in the bureaucracy would help to improve the situation.

Ms. Uma, research student at the Department of Political Science, Gandhigram University shared her experiences of 4 years involvement with women in Panchayats. The Rajiv Gandhi Chair held by Dr. Palanidurai works for creation of awareness, information dissemination, and attempts to create a support base, spreads success stories and builds policy advocacy. There are 4257 women Panchayat Presidents in Tamilnadu.

Mary Sebastian from Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam, presented a paper discussion on seven years of work with self help groups, describing in detail, procedures of weekly meetings, promotion of saving habits and breaking the power of the money lender.

The discussions on this session attempted to go beyond micro experiences and critically analyse self help groups as they have also in some cases served to co-opt women into globalisation. Likewise, women in panchayat or consumer markets, while getting a symbolic space and some marginal gains, are actually isolated from the larger processes of change. Banks take no responsibility for micro credit and women get more burdened. They internalise the market logic and start selling multinational goods out of sheer despair, which destroys local small-scale production.

In the fourth and final session of the day, John Jayaharan, doctoral student from Centre for Social Analysis, presented his research project on "Dalit Culture and Reconstruction of Life After violence", studying Chingleput district of Tamilnadu. He defined culture in a very broad way, including the whole organisation of material life and related the problem of rising violence to the loss of land and common property resources under globalisation. He discussed cases of violence related to acquisition of land (either through buying or through land - grabbing) and also connected with demand for higher wages. He addressed issues linked to the process of modernisation which brings higher marriage expenditure, dowry, demand for electronic goods and job oriented education.

He counterposed this trend with the heritage of a life-sustaining culture among Dalits in which birth and death were crucial events because of lack of access to properties. He also connected this heritage with the remnants of Buddhist culture, which are present in Chingleput district. He critiqued the gap between Dalit Movements which compromise with opportunistic political forces adopt a violent rhetoric and people's life centred culture which he felt, could, more easily connect with an alternative development paradigm centred around life and livelihood. He felt that this life-centred culture could help Dalits to form deeper and more meaningful alliances as built up by National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) which tries to connect the struggles of Dalits, Adivasis, small peasants and workers in the

informal sector. In the discussion it was pointed out that Dalit adolescent girls are often more educated than boys who project a macho image and create problems with the employers. Girls working in small units are facing harassment from their own community and are finding it difficult to get married. This too contributes to rising violence.

Another example was narrated from Shivagangai district regarding the participation of Dalits in the procession of Kandadevi temple. The background was that Dalits had economically made gains by working in the gulf but remained socially stigmatised. In the ensuing conflict, many Dalit women had also been injured.

On the second day, the first session dealt with contested perceptions of "Development". Parvatha Varthini from Sociology Department, Fatima College, Madurai presented a paper on Globalisation and NGDO's. She pointed out that non-governmental organisations are facing threat from three quarters in this present phase of globalisation.

1. From the State by means of control over FCAR.
2. From consumerism within NGOs.
3. From the threat to people's survival itself.

In this situation many organisations face a problem how to preserve their integrity. there is a tendency to go into advocacy work instead of outright people's organisation and modern information technology plays an increasing role. There is a change in the self - perception of NGOs. The Action Groups of the seventies saw themselves as forces of overall transformations. Now many NGOs see globalisation as a fact and are adopting a social welfare line to compensate abdication of responsibility by the state. since four years many call themselves NGDOs to stress on "Development". But whose development? Earlier it was global thinking and local action. Now the grassroots contact does not appear necessary. Varthini critiqued this trend and pleaded for the building of micro level alternatives. She herself works with youth and school children around Usilampatti, an area where female infanticide and foeticide are prevalent.

The second paper in this session was by Darley Jose from CDS Trivandrum on: "Bio_diversity in Traditional Agriculture - a Gender Approach". This comprehensive paper, based on over eight years of research made observations about the crucial role of home - gardens for the preservation of bio-diversity in Kerala. Darley showed in detail how the traditional system not only enhanced levels of nutrition and the availability of fuel and fodder but also gave some cash income to women. The erosion of bio-diversity and tendency towards mono-culture of cash crops has thus had not only ecologically adverse effects but has led to loss of access to resources, loss of employment and destruction of knowledge systems and the feminisation of poverty.

The paper made very creative suggestions for a gender approach to participatory bio-diversity conservation and gave very concrete guidelines for consideration. If taken seriously, these guidelines could bring a sea change in the use of the women's component in the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Discussions centred around food security vs. cash economy as well as management of bio-waste, vermi-culture and home -composting. It was pointed out that while access to markets is important, training women in marketing might not be the most helpful skill. Recovery of knowledge systems, which are destroyed under the onslaught of market forces, may be more important.

The second session of the morning dealt with problems of violence. Ms.Guruvammal of Gandhigram University (Tamil Department) presented a spirited paper on eve teasing and also pursued the problem of violent and insulting language.

Ms.sivasakthi Research student at Gandhigram presented a paper on domestic violence. However, the much larger part of the session went into the presentation and discussion of Aleyamma Vijayan's paper on "Globalisation and issues of women in Kerala" . Aleyamma very graphically presented the effects of globalisation in the Kerala economy, especially the on agriculture and on food security and showed very clearly how this has led to the increase in the rates of suicides, domestic violence and rape cases. There is a fourfold rise of violence during the last decade. She particularly attacked the displacement caused by BDT schemes in harbours and airports scathingly critiqued the import of agricultural goods which have led to crash in rubber prices and have caused displacement of coconut oil by palm oil. She also showed disastrous intervention in health care. The paper was innovative in connecting the violence of the development process with its severe onslaught on the resource base and on people's livelihoods with the actual increase of violence against women.

This perspective was carried ahead by an input by renowned trade unionist Gita Ramakrishna from Chennai who is the National Joint Secretary of Nirman Mazdoor Panchayat Sangh and one of the leading spirits behind Women's Struggle Committee in Chennai.

She highlighted the new economic exploitation under globalisation on top of the still ongoing feudal exploitation. Even highly successful companies like HMT are now sold to multinationals out of "commitment to WTO". The parliament and people have not been consulted before the country was sold out by signing on a dotted line. In the context of corruption she pointed out that Tehelka.com is only the tip of an iceberg. Five crores per minister in five years is a moderate estimate. The objective is to snuff out local production. The scrapping of import duty is unwarranted and unnecessary and its agriculture in unprecedented ways.

The scenario in the public sector is bleak. All the Coal mines are either sold or closed. In the Bokaro mines, the workers are committing suicide, as wages have not been paid in two years. Unfortunately there has been no collective resistance.

A similar lot has befallen weavers and peasants in Andhra. Likewise, in Coimbatore, suicide has doubled over the past two years. Kovai is a deal city. Textile machinery and pump sets are now imported. Binny Mills have been closed. Auxiliary industries and workshops are also affected.

Construction labour is badly hit all over the country. All digging and concreting is now done by machines. In Coimbatore, even in house building readymade concrete parts are being used. It has become a fashion. Corruption in big construction projects is astronomical. In WB projects, 5% "commission" is allowed. Politicians take 10-15%. 2500 crores were spent on one fly over in Mumbai. The profits made are enormous. 100 crores have been spent on fly over by Chennai corporation.

At the same time Manomanoharan Joshi says that childcare services need not be supported even under present conditions, only one rupee per day is provided for child care on a construction site. No subsidy is available for monsoon allowance-a provision, which exists in fisheries after a long struggle. It becomes necessary to struggle on the very right to work, as even the organised sector is collapsing.

Gita also drew attention to the epic struggle of Gram Swaraj Movement against aquaculture which involves large number of women. The Aqua Culture Authority Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha in undue haste because of the pressure from World Bank. The villages have become like company farms. All the major politicians have such farms, violating the Supreme court judgement of 1997, including the Chief Minister and Jayalalitha's close friend Sashikala. In Sashikala's farm there had been satyagraha which had been suppressed with severe rowdyism. Even now criminal cases are pending.

Gita called for a second freedom struggle without which there would be no freedom for women or male workers or any other oppressed sections like Dalits and Adivasis. She commemorated the valiant struggle of women ten years ago when six women had died in the Ennore power plant and the management took a stand that women should not be employed. She also quoted Ram Manoharan Lohia's progressive stand on women, especially property rights and right to work.

This input created a lively discussion in which many more examples of loss of employment due to globalisation were cited. e.g Standard Motors near Chennai had employed 10,000 workers, but had to be closed down because of coming of Food Company which employs 1500 workers.

During the final session, a collective summary was drawn. it was felt that women's studies had focussed on labour participation during the seventies and on the "double

burden" and intra-household discrimination in the eighties, while the nineties, under impact of globalisation, had opened up the destruction of the resource base, property rights and the interplay of caste-class and gender. it was felt that women's studies face new ethical challenges in this situation and need to probe into the political role of women's movements and committed academics. We have to cope with a receding state, expanding markets and uncertain family and community structures. There is a great need to sensitive teachers and students to the gravity of the situation and to equip them for critical research.

**GLOBALISATION, WOMEN'S IDENTITY
AND RISING
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
(WITHIN THE ORISSA CONTEXT)
EASTERN REGION CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Organised by
School Of Women's Studies, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar
In Collaboration with
Indian Association for Women's Studies
13th & 14th March, 2001**

Dr. Asha Hans[#]

Inaugural Session

The opening session provided the background, aims and objectives to the seminar. **Dr. Asha Hans**, Director School of Women's Studies, Utkal University welcomed the participants and provided the thematic focus and the expectations from the meeting. She referred to the background note and hoped that the Conference would go beyond what had been provided as a guideline. She thanked IAWS for their participation in and support to the meeting.

Prof. Jashodhara Bagchi, former Director of the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University and member of IAWS provided an illuminating discourse on globalisation and its linkage to violence and women's identity. Her view, that globalisation has always been recognised across the ages and that capital has always searched for global market and linked to the worst forms of coercion as in slavery, to the almost seductive appeal of its cultural artefacts, not to mention education and other cultural goods provided an interesting framework to the meeting. Her idea that women's role remained invisible in the macro economic order was reiterated by a large number of scholars at the meeting.

She stated that it was to capture the regional specificities of the situation that the Indian Association of Women's Studies had decided to organise deliberations in five

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regions in India, the north, south, west, east and the north-east. As the Co-ordinator for the Eastern Region she had broken this up even further and the first regional workshop was held in Jharkhand.

She hoped that in the next two days the meeting would confront the problems, think about possibilities of resistance for globalisation. She concluded by saying that she looked forward to learning a great deal from the joint deliberations during the next two days.

Smt. Jayanti Pattnaik, the keynote speaker provided an overview of Globalisation and the concurrent violence associated with it. She provided a detailed analysis of the role of media in this context.

She felt that the non-availability of data for analysis has made the assessment of the impact of globalisation difficult. The complexity of assessment she further argued compounded given the multiplicity of women's roles in any society. She then provided her perceptions on the economics of globalisation and its impact on women.

Smt. Pattnaik linked two issues to globalisation in Orissa. The first, which she spoke extensively on, was crimes against women and the other the role of media. She began by discussing the increasing violence against women in the state. She found a wide degree of district level variation in the data but despite this unevenness she provided an analysis of the situation. Her views on the globalisation of media was linked to witnessing India at the receiving end of a number of foreign television channels via satellite. As media perpetuates gender stereotypes it assists in strengthening the invisibility of women's contribution to society. She further provided data on women working for Doordarshan and their confinement to lower levels of the organisation. Despite the large number of laws to control media, women she felt were still objectified.

Session I: The title of this session was Globalisation and its impact on Orissa. It was chaired by Prof. Jashodhara Bagchi. This session formed the backdrop to the meeting. Three extraordinary analysis were presented on the Orissa situation followed by intense discussion.

Dr Kishor Samal, Professor of Economics at the Nabakrushna Chowdhury Centre for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar, providing a general overview of globalisation and its impact on Orissa. The title of his paper was Liberalisation / Globalisation and its impact on Orissa. He began by defining the concepts of globalisation and liberalisation. He traced the reasons for the emphasis on opening of economies in the 1990s. He questioned the process of globalisation itself by making differentiation between physical, financial, human, social and natural capital.

In his debate on the existing situation, he brought in the place of women and children

and the impact of the changing economies on them. He put forward his views on international policies in this context and how rich countries make use of the process to enrich them.

After the extensive discussion of the international changes, he discussed the place of Orissa in the globalisation process. In this he laid emphasis on dis-investment policies and their impact on wages, privatisation and its impact on education and health. In this context he studied three issues- 1) privatisation and its impact on small scale industry and cottage industry 2) The shrimp culture in Chilika , the Gopalpur Tata Steel Project and 3) Multinational Aluminium giants at Kashipur. Finally he provided a overview of people's movements in protesting against globalisation in Orissa.

The second paper was by **Dr. Bijay Bohidar**, Reader of Political Science, Khallikote College, Berhampur, titled: Globalisation and Women's Question in Orissa. Bijay Bohidar's presentation was linked to globalisation, protests against it in Orissa and the women's movement. He argued that Orissa has witnessed a large number of protest movements but these are largely localised and present a fragmented picture. In this context he presented the example of Gopalpur movement against the location of a Steel Plant but which had no impact outside Orissa. The Kashipur movement, which he saw as being larger but again, localised. He commented that some might assume this as post-modern phenomena of an existence without a comprehensive ideology. He forecasted that larger and more movements would take place. At the moments he saw even the BALCO and Kashipur movement as not part of any comprehensive large movement and therefore not able to capture the essence of the fight against globalisation. He argued that this situation existed because of Orissa's rigidly hierarchical society. Power he observed as being in the hands of a small caste the Khandayats. The marginalized in Orissa including, tribals, dalits and women constitute the largest number but are the most marginalised. As issues of social reform, caste etc. are not components of any of these movements, dominance of a patriarchal ideology exists. If any woman's movement, he argued has to come about we need to address the religious conservative ideology prevailing. In this he suggested we need to learn from the less conservative tribal, dalit ideology. He argued that we are talking of learning from other parts of the world but have closed our minds to these alternative cultural modes existing in our society. Women, he argued would gain from these modes.

The third paper presenter was renowned social activist **Ms. Vidhya Das** of Agragamee, an NGO based in Kashipur a tribal District of Orissa. Her paper was on Globalisation and Human Rights of Tribal Women in Orissa. Her paper on tribal women emerges from her experience in working with women in the tribal regions, and also her conviction that women's issue is not only a gender issue, but as much, if not much more, an issue of racism, casteism, and discrimination.

She narrated how the tribal women though members of a hugely underprivileged community still looked at others with fear. Even though tribal societies are considered egalitarian, if the women took time out to participate in political processes, the fragile economy of the home and hearth crashed. Regarding education, tribal women were almost completely illiterate in the tribal districts, did not have skills and liquor played havoc on their lives. She elaborated on how with interventions, the women came forward to manage the community grain banks, put together their savings, and started collective accounts. She then discussed about the issue of brooms, and minor forest produce, and the rights of the tribal women. Tribal women had never bought and sold things, they had little experience of processing, nor the knowledge of finishing goods for the consumer markets but economic independence gave them a unique strength. Next was the fight against the Alumina plant at Kashipur. Women faced horrors like lathi charge, got hurt and injured. This struggle has taught the state and the corporate world that tribal people cannot be wished away, they must be given a due hearing.

Session II- The title of this session was Globalisation and Violence. The Chair Person of this session was Dr. P. K. Mishra, Dept. of Psychology, Utkal University and Steering Committee Member, SWS, Utkal University. There were three papers in this session.

The first paper was presented by **Dr. Paula Bannerjee**, Dept. of South and South East Asian Studies, Calcutta University. The title of her paper was - Marginalised Women, Displacement and Violence in North East India. She presented the other side of globalisation where finance capital and its movement across borders is not the issue. Here are refugee women and children who constitute approximately 80% of people who cross borders because of political reasons. Despite an International Convention which countries have signed most developed countries have closed their borders. As states open borders to capital they close them to populations. One of the methods employed in South Asia is by voluntary repatriation that was carried out in Sri Lanka, Myanmar etc which has been problematic. This has resulted in large numbers being displaced within countries. Bannerjee directed the attention of the participants to the North East of India where the long lasting conflict has meant large scale displacement. These women and children constitute a marginalised body of people whom no nation is concerned with. Nations have been responsible for increasing conflicts across the globe due to sale of large scale armaments and increasing arms budgets.

Women in this area have taken up the issue of closing of borders and conflict due to increase in armaments and ethnic problems. A number of women's groups such as the Naga Mothers have tried to bring about peace in the region.

The second paper of this session was presented by **Ms. Amrita Patel**, Research Assistant of SWS, Utkal University. Her paper gave an overview of the New Economic

Policy initiated in 1991 in India. There is a consensus, she said that during the nineties the growth rate in India has shown some acceleration. This growth rate, she argued, as a result of the economic reforms has not affected the declining trend in poverty. The social and gender development due these reforms is also hardly visible. She provided her findings in the background of Orissa, a poor state of the country with vast mineral resources and a large tribal population, and low literacy, which has very unfavourable gender indices.

In the paper she presented the crime rate and the reported crimes (such as rape, dowry murders, dowry torture, dowry suicides) against women for the last one decade (1989 – 1999) for Orissa. Through statistical data she showed that there has been a rise in the absolute numbers in the crimes as well as in the percentage in the crimes against women in the state, especially in the tribal districts. She concluded that liberalisation, access to foreign media, increasing alcohol consumption etc are some of the possible causes of the increasing crime rate against women of Orissa.

The last paper of this session was by **Dr. Mamata.Tripathy**, Research Associate, School of Women's Studies, Utkal University. The paper was titled as-Rights of slum women in Bhubaneswar in the context of Globalisation. She had shown how the economy has a umbilical relationship with women in the society since the dawn of civilisation and how the women are affected by the economic policies. Even though Article 21 of Indian Constitution along with Article 14 and 19 guarantees a dignified life to every citizen of India, but the social, economical, health status of women deplorable and more so of the slum women.

Empowerment is still a myth for these poor vulnerable weaker section of society particularly in the Third world democratic country like India and more so in a backward state like Orissa. She questioned whether the schemes meant for them ever reach all women, particularly the women working in the fields and living in the slums. These marginalised women provide many basic services to the community. She argued that these slum women are never taken into account while planning for the global economy. The slum women are still completely marginalised, struggling for their life and livelihood in the liberalised market. Their rights are violated every now and then with or without their knowledge. In the paper presentation, she cited some of the violation of rights of the women inhabiting Bhubaneswar slums in the globalised economy. Their right to health, education and livelihood which is at risk in the liberalised market system were the core themes of the discussion.

Session III was the last session of the day. Entitled "Women and Children's Rights Under a Globalisation Process". Dr. Paula Bannerjee presided over the last session. In this session there were two papers. The first was by **Ms. Kasturi Mahaptra**, a social activist well known for her support of Anjana Mishra and running an organisation for the disabled named Open Learning System . Manisha Mazumdar, Co ordinator of the Task Force on Women and Violence presented the second paper.

Ms. Kasturi Mohapatra has been at the forefront of the Child Rights Movement in Orissa. She spoke of two major issues child protection and sex education for adolescents. Her presentation dealt with a programme she had run for class 8- 10 children. She had found that most children had been abused by their relatives and acquaintances. Her presentation shifted to sex education and the lack of sex knowledge among adolescent girls and the role of her organisation in taking sex education and legal literacy to the rural areas.

In the second part of her talk she spoke of the provision of protection to 500-600 children in the cyclone affected areas of Astarang, Nimapara, and Ersama. As children faced both physical and psychological problems after the disaster, support had been very important which she had provided.

The second paper, by **Ms. Manisha Mazumdar**, Coordinator, Task Force on Women and Violence titled 'Globalisation and Prostitution and trafficking of women and girls in Orissa', was based on the findings of the Task force on Women and Violence undertook, on trafficking and prostitution of girls and women in 15 districts of Orissa. Manisha Mazumdar had observed that the findings indicate a direct effect of globalisation. She elaborated on the predominant ideas/reasons for prostitution and trafficking in the state. Linkages to health, education, socio economic status of the sex workers, a day in the life of a sex worker, politician-police-middlemen nexus, functioning of the brothels, and possibilities/opportunities for rehabilitation, were elaborated by her. Poor socio economic condition, discrimination against minorities, unequal treatment of women/girl children, lack of economic viability, education and legal protection are some of the many reasons behind the vulnerable conditions.

14th March

Session IV was "Displacement and other grass root impact" which was chaired by Dr. Bijay Bohidar.

The first presentation was by **Ms. Sandhya**, Activist and worker of a NGO named Ekta Parishad working in the area of Banpur , Orissa. Sandhya opined natural land, forest and water are the foundation of human civilisation, which is at stake due to globalisation. Sandhya shed light in her presentation upon the negative repercussions of displacement not only on the human resources but also on the natural resources. Displacement not only affects the life, livelihood and health of the tribal population but also their cultural life. She narrated her experiences about the exploitation of the tribal women by the forest officials, police and multinational companies.

Ms. Suman Jhuria and Ms. Mukta Jhuria , workers in the Kashipur area and leaders in the agitation against the Alumina giant narrated their perceptions of

globalisation. They said that the people's agitation was spontaneous when their life, livelihood, home and forest was being snatched by multinationals. They themselves felt the need for uniting to check the invasion of the multinationals. The lathi charge, fire gas and finally shooting by the police in which some of their villagers died, did not deter them. These women, very eloquently, described the genesis of the agitation, the resistance and the strength of purpose. The question answer session after their narration was lively and interesting and provided an insight into the tribal women's thought process and workings.

Session V – Titled “ The Economics of globalisation” had 6 paper presenters. Smt. Jayanti Pattnaik chaired this session.

Ms. Manipadma Jena, the first paper presenter analysed the role of media in India, in the context of globalisation, began by inquiring into its impact on women in general. She questioned whether we are in control or are overwhelmed by the process. Her answer was that she felt that in India we are at this point of time not overwhelmed but rather disoriented. She suggested that what we have to analyse the positive and negative aspects. The positive side of the new media she demarcated as providing women with information, a new direction to be self reliant, and self assertive. The negative side she said constituted the mindless use of women in the commercialisation process. Women's bodies are exploited without any projection of their achievements.

Manipadma's paper covered different types of media and its affect on women's lives in Orissa. She covered electronic, print media, advertisements, as well as films. In the first part she presented the use of supplements by print media. It is in these supplements she found the most change and here women's bodies find place increasingly larger space through fashion and beauty contests. In the second she discussed about the advertisements of household equipment which affected women through demand on dowry. In the third she argued that confessional columns which were mostly manufactured were affecting the youth and creating a new culture. These columns emphasised pre-marital sex, live in relationships etc. Manipadma also spoke of advertisements and use of women's stereotyped roles in the advertisements that are not only unreal but strengthen patriarchal norms. Finally Manipadma saw in serials and films women projected with a superhuman capacity for suffering, and not the real life of achievers of which there are many. She ended her presentation with the issues of easy access to pornography on the Internet and films despite laws, norms and committees that are ineffective as they can be circumvented.

Ms. Navaneeta Rath presented a paper titled 'Impact of globalisation on women workers in the handicraft sector – a study of the female appliqué workers of Orissa'. The paper dealt with the integration of the national market with the international market and removal of trade barriers and the opportunities and threats posed by it

in the context of quality, cost and productivity. Rath chose to observe the quality of human capital in appliqué sector and to analyse the changing terms of trade and to explore the areas of improvement. She concluded with data presentation that women as human capital are becoming incompetent, lack formal institutional training and are illiterate. They are unable to express themselves or to devote extended hours at the units and resented overtime work. They face premature retrenchment and are assigned subsidiary roles. She also saw erosion of social protection and a decline in entrepreneurial attitude. There has also been a rapid increase in child labour. She ended with a number of recommendations.

The next paper was titled "Feminisation of Poverty and the wage inequality in the unorganised sector" by **Dr. P.Yashodhara**. In the view of the presenter women are largely excluded from economic decision-making. They face poor working conditions, low wages and limited employment and professional opportunities. Much of the contribution made by Women has remained invisible or unpaid. This discrimination has led to "Feminisation of Poverty".

Poverty has a distinct gender dimension. Among the poor, women are poorer. They live in subsistence domain, they disproportionately contribute to unskilled labour, they receive low wages for the work they put in and their access to surplus accumulation and control is severely restricted. The consequences of the above are three fold: first, it impinges on the quality of life of the women themselves. Second, it affects the quality of life of the children they look after. Third, there is an inter-generation effect, which adversely affects the society as a whole and that, includes men as well. As a case study, she presented the life conditions and the wage inequality in the women construction labourers.

Ms. Sarbani Ghosh of SWS, Jadavpur University described the invisibility of women's research in all academic circles. There is a lack of documentation in women's studies.

Ms. Manjulika Ghose presented her paper on Globalisation and women. She discussed the positive as well as negative impacts of globalisation on women. In the positive effects of globalisation so far as women are concerned she presented the observations from interviews of MBA girl students at IIM, Joka, Kolkata and also with those from the AIISWBM, Kolkata, girl students from the Department of Tourism and Tea Management Centre, University of North Bengal who are trying to come out of the traditional domestic and professional roles and are entering into uncharted paths of employment. She saw a boost in acquiring professional and managerial skills which are directly job-oriented but which affect their personal lives. There is she felt a definite paradigm shift in the women's perception of themselves.

She presented the changes that globalisation might have brought about in the employment opportunities of women and their perceptions of themselves divorced

from the 'other', which represents the male and the society at large. In regard to less skilled women she presented a case of settlers from Rangpur district, now a part of Bangladesh, which forms the international border with West Bengal whose lot has deteriorated due to globalisation

In conclusion she perceived that while globalisation created opportunities, due to its highly urban-centric character, globalisation has tended to accentuate the marginalisation of rural women.

Dr. Urmimala Das' paper titled 'Contextualising Voices of Women Against Globalisation and Violence in Kashipur, Orissa' was the last paper of the session. Dr. Urmimala Das traced the story of economic development in the state and the appalling deprivation, hunger, ill health, homelessness, illiteracy still persisting. In the paper she discussed the developmental projects and the fights against it by the indigenous tribals. In particular her attempt was to contextualise of voices of women in Kashipur people movement against the Alumina project. She traced the international capital trickling to Kashipur, how the state had given a freehand to start various projects in the tribal hinterland of Kashipur area in Rayagada district. Community needs of these tribals like their rights over land, water, fire wood and forest produce was overlooked. Development planners never raised the very source of livelihood questions.

The protest movement and women are always visible at its forefront. They faced 'lathis', 'bullets', which they tolerated but without being violent. She gave examples of the enormous sacrifice of the simple tribal women folk. She concluded with the interface of feminist struggle and the role of NGOs in resisting globalisation.

Round Table

A member of AIDWA in Orissa, **Ms. Tapasi Praharaj** chaired the Round Table. In her introductory remarks she provided a background to the globalisation process in the world and India, starting from the depression of the 1930s.

Tapasi Praharaj, in the context of Orissa, said that modernisation of mining activities has affected the women of Sundergarh and Keonjhar mining areas. Conversion of agricultural land into aquafarms has rendered many women agricultural workers jobless. Another aspect of globalisation is the stopping of the Public distribution system (PDS). About 40 crore women are below the poverty line. The removal of the PDS has impacted the poor women of India adversely. The health sector reforms meant paying user fees for health care and increased the cost of life saving and essential medicines. Women who are marginalised with respect to health care are further removed from accessing health care system. She concluded that this fight was similar to the one against the East India company and could like the independence struggle, where we have to safeguard both our lives and our future.

Dr. Asha Hans commenced the discussion in the Round Table by suggesting that we have to see how far we can go and what our visions, goals are. We also have to remember, she argued that Orissa is going to be the centre of the globalisation process and academics, social activists and grass root workers have to consolidate to stand for people's rights. In this session she said, we need to suggest strategies.

Ms. Bijaybhasini Mohanty, had presented observations of a survey on women workers in the construction industry which she had carried out. After agriculture, she said construction is the second largest sector employing women. Globalisation had brought a lot of hopes in the construction sector. In reality the lives of these workers had not changed and among the women there was a defeatism, which she felt, could be countered by providing them with information on their rights.

Other members of the round table **Srabani and Yashodra** emphasised the role of media. **Dr Anup Das** spoke about women's identity, lack of data and other issues that hamper women's progress but felt that women's capacity was extensive and could be further strengthened by various means, which he suggested.

Prof. B. K Nayak: a Professor of Mathematics, began by saying that he was not an activist himself but had seen women participating in the Gopalpur movement. He discussed how they were very sure of their needs when they were asked what these were. He examined the role of World Bank in the Orissa projects and suggested that women needed to be protected from the effects of globalisation.

Dr. Sudhir Jena Reader in Political Science spoke of agricultural implements and a need to change them. He further examined the role of Panchayats in the process of empowerment of women in Orissa.

Valedictory

The proceedings were mostly in Oriya, as most participants said they could understand the language. **Prof. Gokulanda Das**, who was then the Vice Chancellor of Utkal University presided over the programme.

Dr. Asha Hans gave a brief introduction regarding the purpose, theme and intention for holding such a conference. As the context of the conference was Orissa, she emphasised the importance of such a session. This provided a platform for not only the academicians to present their views on the impact of globalisation but also there was interface with grass root level NGOs, workers and activists who are struggling against the onslaught of globalisation in the state.

Dr. S N Mishra gave the welcome address. He informed those present about the activities of SWS, Utkal University and expressed his happiness on being able to organise the regional conference of IAWS along with SWS.

Ms. Tapasi Praharaj, the Guest of Honour, elaborated on the spread of privatisation in the state and how all sectors such as railways, banks, insurance, education (teachers) are resisting the manipulation of the government with respect to privatisation. Women are affected the most in such a situation. She lamented that the government has not been able to bring out the policy for women as yet. As she had elaborately narrated the scenario in her previous address, she concluded that that this fight was the struggle for survival in which all must join hands.

Dr. Kamala Das, Hon'ble Minister of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Orissa, the Chief Guest of the valedictory programme, addressed all explaining the rationale of celebrating the year 2001 as year of women's empowerment. Govt. of India as well as the Orissa govt. is planning to launch many developmental programmes in this year.

Describing the process of liberalisation and privatisation as inevitable, she questioned as to why Orissa is still economically backward in spite of being endowed with mineral and forest resources. Also she cautioned that one should not forget one's own culture and heritage in this new world order.

Referring to the development of women, Dr. Das emphasised the need for economic independence of women and formation of Self Help Groups (SHG) in this regard. The state policy for women, which is going to be notified soon, will give a new direction to the developmental activities for women in the state of Orissa. About education of girls, she expressed her regret in the low enrolment of girls in the primary stage as well as high drop out rate. Also she urged the college / university educated girls to be economically sound. In a situation where crimes against women are rising, girls themselves have to be capable and build skills to tackle the evils of the society.

The tribal women from Kashipur confronted the Minister Dr. Das and asked her as to why they are being disturbed every now and then. According to them the multinational companies have been displacing inhabitants and robbing them of their life, forest and land. Dr. Das, however, justified that with the setting up of the JK Paper Mill at Rayagada, locals have benefited. Also, if the protests against Paradip Port were valid, then the Port would never have been established.

Prof G. Das in his address remarked on the amazing confidence of the tribal women and equated it to the inherent force or shakti within each woman. But the wastage of education amongst girls for marriage is not desirable. He urged each girl to be capable in her own way to be economically sound and be able to take care of herself as well as the family. As far as globalisation goes, he reminded that this policy of open market should not destroy our culture and heritage. The onus is on us to safeguard and maintain the identity of our state.

Amrita Patel of SWS gave the vote of thanks.

IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON WOMEN'S LIVES[§] EASTERN REGION WORKSHOP REPORT

Organised by ABHIYAN, Jharkhand
in Collaboration with
the Indian Association for Women's Studies

4th & 5th November 2000

Ms. Vasavi

A regional seminar was organised by Abhiyan and the IAWS at the Xavier Social Work Institute, Ranchi to discuss the impact of liberalisation on the lives of women in Jharkhand. The seminar opened with a Jharkhandi Geet and a traditional adivasi felicitation of the team from Calcutta. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi inaugurated the proceedings and Ms. Vasavi read out the messages of the IAWS, President, Dr. Zarina Bhatti. Ms. Vasavi introduced the theme, underlining the impact that appropriation of forest resources was having on the lives of adivasi women. The multinationals, she argued were intensifying this exploitation and women would have to be in the forefront in the struggles against global capital. Prof. Nirmala Banerjee underlined the globalisation in the region to be atleast 2000 years old and argued how it was not possible to set the clock back. But strategies to regulate the process require organised and collective efforts. Dr. Indu Dhan highlighted the importance of co-operatives in getting fair prices. Dr. Ramesh Sharan, put forth a detailed review of the education levels of women in Jharkhand (15-44 age group) and underlined how development policies had infact widened the gap between women and men. Dr. Rose Kerketta - highlighted the special vulnerability of the Jharkhand region to global capital due to its rich mineral resource. Kavita Rai delineated the pre-colonial status of Jharkhandi women and argued that women controlled the power structures. The penetration of global capital has meant an attack on the identities of adivasi and dalit women. Dayamani Barla, noted the specific impact of globalisation on villages, especially the rise in fuel prices that was affecting the mobility of women.

Ms. Jayanti Sen and Dr. Kiran chaired the second session and Prof. Malan Cha Ghosh presented their papers. Faisal Anurag underlined the backtracking of the welfare state and highlighted the history of protest and resistance in adivasi communities

[§] This is an abridged English version of a full-fledged Hindi report available with the Author.

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across India.

In the session chaired by Prof. Nirmala Banerjee, Munni Hansda and Dayamani Barla put forth their views, Sankhi Sahu who had dared to plough and had been ostracized by the villages (Kalinga in Gumla District) narrated her struggle. The differential sex ratios in the adivasi – and non-advasi regions of Jharkhand were discussed.

The proceedings concluded with a presentation by comrade A.K. Rai. He highlighted the relationship between women's labour and the atrocities against them and pointed out to the dangers of privatisation and liberalisation especially for women. In response to comrade Rai's presentation, Prof. Bagchi underlined the need to understand better the significance of feminism.

The two-day workshop had been organised in the wake of the formation of Jharkhand as a new state. The workshop ended on a note of thanks by Chaina Moitra to Sanchetna, Calcutta for providing economic support and Shravani, Rosaliya, Kanti, Mira, Phulomoni, Piyala, Prakash and Biju Toppo for making the arrangements possible. Rapporteurship was done by Tete, Kavita and Phulomoni. Ms. Vasavi was thanked by the participants for arranging this much-needed workshop.

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